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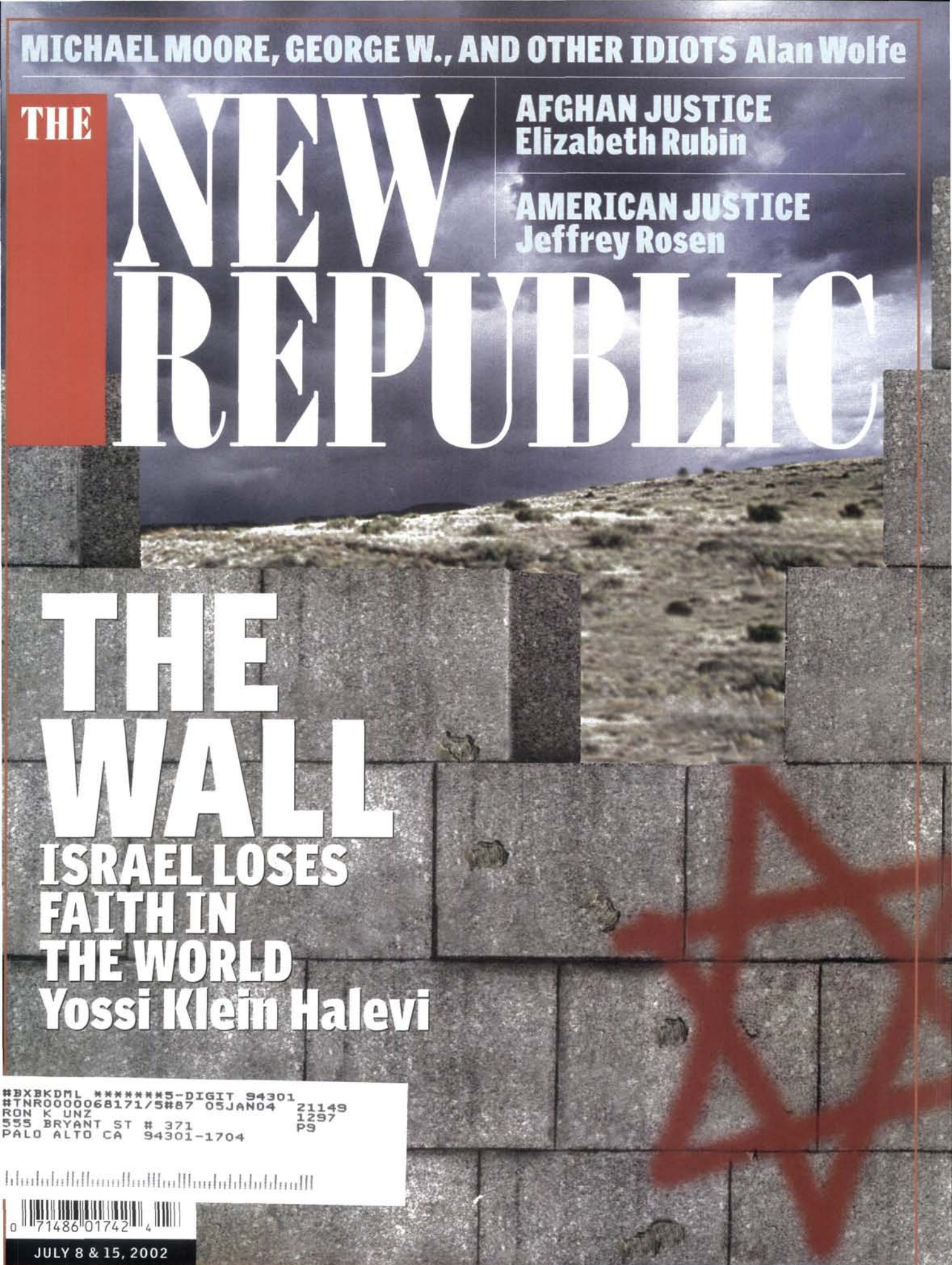

THE WALL

ISRAEL LOSES FAITH IN THE WORLD

Yossi Klein Halevi

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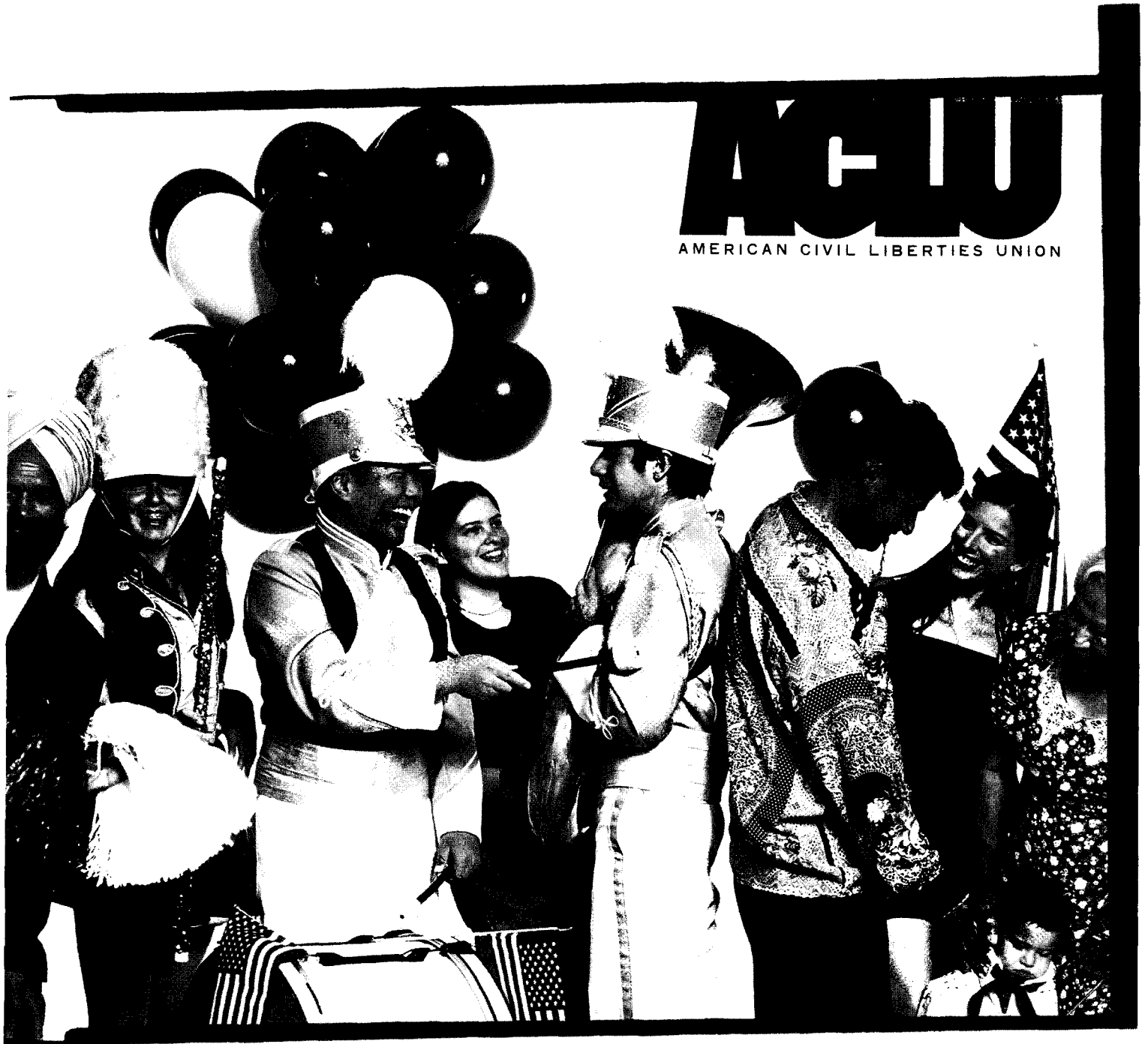

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A Journal of Politics and the Arts

WASHINGTON, D.C.
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CORRESPONDENCE

Ring of Kerry

TO THE EDITORS:

Michael Crowley's June 3 article "The Makeover" asks an odd question: "Can John Kerry make people like him?" We are talking about perhaps the most popular politician in Massachusetts. He beat the very popular governor of that state like a gong in his last reelection campaign. So far the Republicans have not been able to find a sacrificial lamb for 2002. So much for the question. Now about that makeover: Not only is Kerry hugely popular at home, but his policy proposals are by and large mainstream—not those of a "Massachusetts liberal" playing to the home crowd. So other Democrats might profitably look to him as the model for their own makeovers, not his. The John Kerry I have known for more than 30 years is a much more complex character than the story line of the article would allow. He does not need a makeover, but he may need more nuanced reporting.

SAM BROWN JR.
Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITORS:

Regarding Michael Crowley's article on John Kerry, specifically his discussion of Kerry's self-love, I have the following anecdote to relate: While interning on Capitol Hill during the summer of 2001, I was waiting in the Senate cafeteria line one day when I heard a voice behind me say, "Excuse us." There was no us—only John Kerry, using the Royal "we."

NOAH MCCORMACK
New York, New York

Class act

TO THE EDITORS:

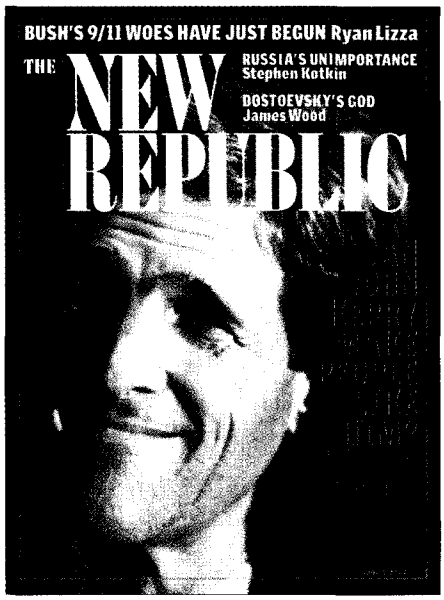
Thank you to Nathan Glazer for his moving tribute to David Riesman, the finest teacher I have known ("Higher Ed," June 3). Intellectually, he always urged people to lean into the wind, to have what he called the "nerve of failure," or the willingness to withstand criticism from one's peers for nonconformity. He was from the old school. He was a teacher in the deepest and best sense of that word, and his students will miss him greatly.

DAVID BLANKENHORN
President
Institute for American Valves
New York, New York

Waste not

TO THE EDITORS:

What a disappointment to learn that TNR has joined sides with all the other NIMBYS of the Eastern establishment who want


BUSH'S 9/11 WOES HAVE JUST BEGUN Ryan Lizza
THE NEW REPUBLIC
RUSSIA'S UNIMPORTANCE Stephen Kotkin
DOSTOEVSKY'S GOD James Wood

us to believe that transporting 40,000 tons of nuclear waste across the country to Yucca Mountain is somehow safer than building the same permanent storage tanks at the sites where the waste is produced ("Nuclear Waste," May 27). What utter nonsense. Your weak argument that it would be easier to secure the waste in one central depository than to do so in 131 separate sites loses its punch when one considers that the material will still have to be transported "from 131 temporary facilities scattered across 39 states." How can that possibly be safer than depositing the waste where it is produced?

K. LAMONTE JOHN
Burke, Virginia

TO THE EDITORS:

Your editorial awoke in me memories dating back to 1970, when I was chairman of the energy committee of the Cincinnati mayor's environmental task force, on which I was well known as an opponent of nuclear power generation. The University of Cincinnati's department of nuclear engineering invited me to debate the issue with faculty. One of the main issues I raised was that of nuclear waste disposal. Faculty and students practically laughed me out of the room. There were *numerous* methods, economically reasonable and safe for long-term (i.e., 25,000 years) storage, they claimed. Of the problems that exist even today only one is the design of a hazardous waste marker that will be readable and comprehensible 25,000 years from now. Mankind, led by this United States of America that we so deeply love, is leaving a deadly problem for future generations.

S. TED ISAACS, P.E.
Cincinnati, Ohio

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Solving the Teacher Shortage: A Matter of Professional Standards

Kurt M. Landgraf, President & CEO of Educational Testing Service

Hospitals in America are facing a crunch in hiring enough qualified nurses. In response, some states allow hospitals and public policymakers to use financial incentives to recruit trained and qualified nurses. No one is suggesting we relax professional standards to fill the need for nurses.

When it comes to education, however, we seem to think differently. Everywhere one turns there is talk of a dire teacher shortage. As a result, the pressure is on to adopt "emergency" procedures enabling untrained, untested and unlicensed people to assume the role — and title — of "teacher."

Instead of seeking to fill slots through gimmicks and temporary fixes, we should invest in attracting top tier candidates and nurturing their professional development. We also must figure out how to keep many of the highly qualified, experienced and dedicated professionals who are already in our schools. As Arthur Wise, president of the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, pointed out at a conference co-sponsored by ETS and the Public Education Institute of Rutgers University, "We have a huge teacher retention problem. And, the more we resort to emergency procedures to get warm bodies into the classroom, the higher the attrition rate is going to be."

Federal education reform legislation mandates that there should be a "highly qualified" teacher in every classroom. That is an important requirement, but it is just the beginning. We must ensure that every child is taught by someone with the knowledge, skills, and dedication required of a truly competent teacher.

Schools and teachers must be held accountable for student outcomes — for how well students perform against standards set by each state. Such standards-based accountability is perfectly reasonable, and long overdue.

At the same time, we must recognize that accountability is a two-way street. And teachers are more than justified in demanding that they receive the authority, professional development and training, and resources they need to do what the job requires. They deserve respect and recognition equal to the mission that they undertake on our behalf; that means, among other things, higher salaries and better working conditions. It also requires greater parental involvement and improved student discipline.

"We have a huge teacher retention problem. And, the more we resort to emergency procedures to get warm bodies into the classroom, the higher the attrition rate is going to be."

— Arthur Wise

If we want better teachers, we have to treat our teachers better. Only if we do these things will we solve the "teacher shortage" problem. Only then will we have a chance of ensuring that every classroom and every child in America has a good teacher.

ETS *Educational Testing Service*

We invite you to continue this dialogue by contacting us via e-mail at: issues@ets.org

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TRB

FROM WASHINGTON

Off-Color

WARD CONNERLY IS at it again. The man behind California's Proposition 209—which in 1996 ended racial preferences in state hiring, contracting, and admissions—wants to go one step further and stop (with a few exceptions) the state from classifying people by race at all. Connerly's Racial Privacy Initiative (RPI), probably coming to the California primary ballot in 2004, is an even purer distillation of contemporary conservative thinking about race than his affirmative action ban. And the principle governing that thinking is, of course, color blindness. "The official policy of the state ... would no longer treat the race of individual citizens as a matter of moral or civil importance. It would no longer, in other words, reflect the very ideology that ... we decry," wrote *National Review* in endorsing Connerly's effort. Connerly himself explains, "Until I am senile or no longer draw a breath, I will constantly urge the government to embrace race-blind policies." RPI signature-gatherers entreat Californians to "eliminate racial profiling."

That last slogan should strike you as odd. In fact, it suggests just how schizophrenic conservative rhetoric on race has become. On the one hand, conservatives blithely endorse Connerly's initiative as the natural extension of their long-standing battle against racial preferences. On the other, since September 11, conservatives have unceremoniously junked the very principle on which all that anti-affirmative action crusading rests: color blindness. When it comes to Arabs and the war on terrorism, conservatives don't want to "eliminate racial profiling" at all. They want the ACLU and all the other politically correct guiltmongers to get out of the way and let the government start practicing it. In its writing on affirmative action and its writing on homeland security, the American right is engaged in a dialogue of the deaf—with itself.

To be sure, color blindness isn't the only basis for opposing racial preferences. But the others aren't very persuasive. Conservatives sometimes argue, for instance, that affirmative action is ineffective, that it doesn't really promote African American upward mobility. Without racial preferences, they say, blacks might attend lesser colleges, but they would fare better at them and, as a result, do at least as well in later life. But in a massive empirical study, presented in their 1998 book *The Shape of the River*, former college presidents William G. Bowen and Derek Bok show that black students at prestigious universities graduate at higher rates, attain more advanced degrees, and earn higher salaries than black students *with the same SAT scores* at less-selective schools. Bowen and Bok also reveal that similarly prepared black students become more academically self-confident at prestigious universities than at less prestigious ones, which pretty much devastates another widespread conservative contention—that racial preferences damage black self-esteem. And while affirmative action does deny some white students the upward mobility it affords blacks, the number of black and other minority beneficiaries is so small that, according to Bowen and Bok's calculations, eliminating preferences would only raise the average white applicant's chances of gaining admission to a selective university from 25 percent to 26.5 percent.

Indeed, in a 1998 review of Bowen and Bok's book in *The Weekly Standard*, Dinesh D'Souza quotes fellow affirmative action critic Shelby Steele as saying, "[O]ur side has only one thing to offer, and that is moral principle." D'Souza goes on to argue, "When the issue is posed in the basic vocabulary of right and wrong—a lexicon that is utterly incomprehensible to Bowen and Bok—the tortured rationalizations of affirmative-action advocates collapse." But it is precisely because D'Souza cannot refute Bowen and Bok's empirical evidence of net sociological gain that he implicitly acknowledges that the moral principle of color blindness is all he and his fellow preference opponents have left.

Color blindness is nothing to sneeze at. In an August 2001 co-authored *Washington Times* op-ed, former Ronald Reagan administration Attorney General Edwin Meese calls it nothing less than the "first principle of justice" and "the only solid foundation for self-government." But that just makes the right's post-9/11 abandonment of the principle all the more extraordinary. In fact, the conservative logic in favor of racially profiling Arabs represents a kind of inverse of the conservative logic against affirmative action. When they defend racial profiling in the war on terrorism, conservatives generally avoid the language of moral principle altogether. Instead, they argue that abstract theory should not interfere with practical efforts to improve security. Opposition to racial profiling, argued the *Standard* in a recent editorial, "defies common sense." In an October 2001 column in *National Review*, John Derbyshire called profiling "practical and perfectly sensible" and its opponents "dogmatic and unreasoned." That same month, in a *National Review Online* article entitled "Profiling Proposal," Robert A. Levy warned against "knee-jerk invocation of theories that refuse to yield despite the exigencies of the moment."

Whether racial profiling is, in fact, the best way to enhance America's security can be debated empirically. In a 2000 study, for instance, the U.S. Customs Service found that when it removed race from its criteria for border searches and focused attention on suspicious behavior instead, it uncovered contraband at a higher rate. Similarly, an anonymous post-9/11 memo written by five senior U.S. intelligence specialists (and leaked to *The Boston Globe*) noted that "this behavioral approach is far more likely to be helpful to the intelligence and law enforcement communities than is profiling." And as Harvard's Juliette Kayyem points out, racial profiling of Arabs would probably have fingered neither José Padilla (Hispanic) nor shoe-bomber Richard Reid (British of West Indian descent).

But for the sake of argument, let's assume racial profiling does decrease the odds of another terrorist attack. That still doesn't explain why conservatives believe this practical benefit outweighs a moral principle that Meese calls the "first principle of justice." Nor does it explain why they think affirmative action's practical benefits to African Americans *don't* trump that principle.

The point isn't that conservatives—for the sake of intellectual honesty—must support both racial profiling and racial preferences or support neither. They could still argue that color blindness outweighs black upward mobility but not homeland security. But that itself would represent an important concession. It would mean conservatives no longer cloaked their opposition to preferences in the language of color-blind absolutism, as Connerly and his allies do today. In fact, it would force conservatives to explain why color blindness—although not an overriding principle—still matters more than improving African Americans' chances of entering the middle and upper-middle classes. Which would raise the possibility that the American right's support for racial profiling and opposition to racial preferences have little to do with principle at all. And a lot to do with whose ox is being gored.

PETER BEINART

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Free Speech

"THE UNITED STATES of America will support the creation of a Palestinian state, whose borders and certain aspects of its sovereignty will be provisional until resolved as part of a final settlement in the Middle East.... And the United States will not support the establishment of a Palestinian state until its leaders engage in a sustained fight against the terrorists and dismantle their infrastructure." These perfectly reasonable propositions were uttered by President George W. Bush in his speech in the Rose Garden on June 24. The speech was a vindication of Ariel Sharon's insistence that the eradication of terrorism is not a part of the peace process, but a condition of a peace process.

The Israelis should not interpret the speech as a green light for the entirety of the Likud agenda: The United States will almost certainly not look kindly upon any exploitation of the crisis for the purpose of increased Israeli settlement in the already inflamed territories. But George W. Bush was rightly and ringingly clear that Yasir Arafat and Arafatism—the view that the creation of a national state does not require the renunciation of political violence and the transition to a national life that suffices with politics—has lost legitimacy in the eyes of the United States. The moral debate about Arafat is over. He no longer fools anybody. (Well, almost anybody: The ranting old coward is still a romantic figure in Europe.) And if any doubts remained about the man's suitability for history, there he was in *Ha'aretz* last week, in the aftermath of another week of suicide bombing, helplessly watching Israeli troops swarm all over the West Bank as a consequence of the failure of his own leadership, announcing in an interview that he was now prepared to accept the peace plan that Ehud Barak offered him at Camp David two years ago. What is the Arabic word for chutzpah? How many people, Israelis and Palestinians, have to perish for this man's lack of magnitude? Arafat is fortunate that his people are so busy revering the martyrdom of their sons and daughters. Otherwise they might be martyring him.

The president's speech was not exactly momentous—it is not clear that the president is capable of momentousness; but it did contain one argument that is worth pondering. The president maintained that the birth of a Palestinian state must await the birth of Palestinian democracy. "I call on the Palestinian people to elect new leaders," he said, "leaders not compromised by terror. I call upon them to build a practicing democracy based on tolerance and liberty." The sentiments are the right ones, of course; but they are not, politically speaking, sufficiently sophisticated. Elections have often brought to power leaders with very dirty hands. If the Palestinians reelect Arafat in a free and fair election, will the United States reject the results of such an election? If so, then the United States will be violating the democratic principles that it is extolling. And what if Arafat—or, say, Marwan Barghouti—is elected and (hard as it is to imagine) proceeds to crack down autocratically on terror and to accept a territorial compromise with Israel, so that a two-state solution may finally become real? Would it be in Israel's interest to reject a genuine peace agreement with an autocratic Palestinian government? After all, the world is full of autocratic regimes that keep the peace.

The argument that democracy must precede peace may be a noble argument, but it may be also a callous one in a situation of emergency, when many innocent people are dying for the absence of peace. Surely a free Palestinian press is not as urgent an objective, morally and politically, as a cessation of Palestinian suicide bombing. Anyway, there are free Palestinian newspapers and the terrorism marches on. There is something about Bush's preference for democratization over peacemaking that seems doctrinaire, and easily exploitable by Israeli politicians who have for a long time used the ideal of democratization as a cynical way of thwarting all diplomatic progress. There is also something a little hypocritical about the president's Jeffersonian expectations of Nablus and Gaza: He expresses no such expectations about Riyadh and Cairo. And the United States was absolutely right to make war on the Taliban and the terrorists in Afghanistan with or without the endorsement of a *loya jirga*.

If Palestinian political reform is a genuine desire of the Palestinians, then it will proceed; and if it is not, then the American (and Israeli) attempt to bring it into being will only discredit it in the eyes of the people whose lives it is designed to improve. The corruption of the Palestinian Authority is not the problem for Israel and the problem for the world. The problem for Israel and the world is that the Palestinian Authority is complicit in a systematic community-wide policy of murder, and perversely refuses to accept its damn state. ■

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INDUSTRY STANDARD: When President George W. Bush announced his reorganization of homeland security this month, he resorted to a venerable Washington trope: an eminence-filled commission. The new Homeland Security Advisory Council (HSAC) is charged with generating counterterrorism strategy and overseeing creation of the new department. As he surrounded himself with the newly minted HSAC—including UBS PaineWebber Chairman and CEO Joseph J. Grano Jr. and former Energy Secretary James Schlesinger—Bush announced, "You all can play a very useful role in this process. You bring a lot of heft and a lot of experience and a lot of know-how." But one HSAC member, William H. Webster, brings an unusual kind of homeland-security experience—experience in stymieing it. In the 1990s Webster—a former director of the FBI and the CIA—briefly served as a lobbyist for the airline industry. His main responsibility? Blocking legislation that would require background checks of airport employees and tighter screening of passenger baggage. The first idea, he complained to Congress in 1992, "would subject the industry to a very heavy diversion of resources." More importantly, Webster's counterterrorism bona fides lent a patina of credibility to the airlines' argument that the proposed reforms would not enhance security. In response to subsequent criticism, Carol Hallett, president of the Air Transport Association, wrote in *The New York Times* in August 1996: "The airline industry requires expertise in security, and that is why it turned to William Webster, the former FBI director, for guidance." Alas, Webster proved a very effective spokesman for his cause: The most stringent new security requirements didn't go into effect until after September 11. All of which raises questions not merely about why Webster is now sitting on a commission devoted to the very homeland security he helped undermine? It raises questions about why no one is sitting on a commission looking into Webster.

ANIMAL FARM: Usually, when members of Congress secure pork for their constituents, they brag about it to the folks back home. But the stinging critiques of this year's ridiculously bloated farm bill have made the members of the House Agriculture Committee, where the legislation was cooked up, a tad defensive. Which is apparently why the committee, not content with wasting billions of federal dollars on farm subsidies, has now produced a twelve-page color brochure defending the legislation. The brochure is mostly filled with quotes from the Founders paying homage to the humble farmer. But lest it be purely an exercise in nostalgia, it also offers a truly novel argument in favor of the bill: The farm bill—larded with the sorts of federal subsidies that would warm a Socialist's heart—is actually the ultimate tool of global capitalism. "U.S. farm policy under the 2002 Farm Bill," the brochure proclaims, "strengthens U.S. trade negotiators, making foreign countries reconsider their big subsidies and insurmountable trade barriers the same way the former Soviet Union was forced to reconsider the Cold War when then-President Reagan established the U.S. policy of 'Peace Through Strength' that brought down Communism." Thank goodness the Ag Committee kept the United States from adopting a policy of agricultural free trade; the protectionist consequences could have been devastating.

CRYSTAL CLEAR: Members of Congress who voted for campaign finance reform last March could be forgiven for thinking they voted to outlaw soft money. After all, the very first section of the bill rather unequivocally prohibits

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"any officer or agent of [any] national committee, and any entity that is directly or indirectly established, financed, maintained, or controlled by such a national committee" from "solicit[ing], receiv[ing], or direct[ing] to another person a contribution, donation, or transfer of funds, or any other thing of value, or spend any funds, that are not subject to [hard money] limitations." The bill goes on to impose similar bans on state, district, and local committees and individual candidates for federal office. And just in case there was any residual confusion, a widely circulated summary provided by the bill's lead Senate sponsor, John McCain, states: "Taken together, these soft money provisions are designed to shut down the soft money loophole as comprehensively as possible." Alas, the Federal Election Commission (FEC), the agency responsible for implementing the new law, reads it differently. In a series of rulings last week, a majority of the FEC's six commissioners invoked what can only be described as Clintonian logic to "clarify" several provisions of the bill not in need of clarification. A majority of the commissioners, for example, interpreted the word "solicit" as *not* describing the vast majority of ways politicians raise money—i.e., without asking for it explicitly. Similarly, a majority voted to allow national parties to funnel soft money into parallel organizations created specifically for that purpose—as long as they're created before November 6. (The confusion was apparently over whether any decision to gut the law before it takes effect violates the spirit of the law. Turns out it doesn't.) Referring to critics of the FEC's recent rulings, Commissioner Bradley Smith complained, "[P]art of their agenda, openly stated, is to abolish the commission and replace it with an agenda that will be subservient to their desires." True enough. And those desires amount merely to enforcing the law.

AND NOW THE COVER-UP: Readers of this space will note that we've paid special (perhaps obsessive) attention to President Bush's repeated claim that during the presidential campaign, "in Chicago," he declared he would permit a deficit only in case of war, recession, or national emergency. While Bush has maintained that he offered these three caveats during the campaign, no such statement can be found in the public record. This invented anecdote matters because it is connected to a larger lie: Bush's promise that the United States could enact a massive tax cut, new social spending, and still pay off the national debt. This week *The Washington Post* asked the White House Press Office—which has simply refused to return our calls on the topic—for evidence that Bush had made such a statement. And in response, the White House pointed the *Post* to Bush's remarks at two GOP debates in 2000, as well as to remarks he made at the White House last September. But at no time during those debates did Bush say he'd allow deficits in the case of war, recession, or national emergency. And Bush's White House remarks occurred not during the campaign but after he'd been in office for eight months and *it was already clear* he would break his budgetary promises. Moreover, none of these remarks happened, as Bush says they did, in Chicago. Perhaps the White House shouldn't have returned the *Post*'s calls either.

HOPE DIES LAST: We're happy to announce that our Israel correspondent Yossi Klein Halevi's important book *At the Entrance to the Garden of Eden: A Jew's Search for Hope with Christians and Muslims in the Holy Land* has just been published in paperback by HarperCollins. ■

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On the Hill

Drug Use

By Michael Crowley

The prescription-drug debate has returned to Capitol Hill, and, depressingly, things have picked up pretty much where they left off before the last election. Last week, after House Republicans advanced an unrealistically thin $350 billion plan to subsidize drug costs for the elderly, Democrats pounced. House Democratic Leader Richard Gephardt doubted that "anyone can take Republican claims seriously" and flayed the GOP's "sham bill." In the party's weekly radio address, Michigan Democrat John Dingell mocked the Republicans' "phantom benefit" and compared GOP leaders to shady car dealers. A June memo prepared by the House Democratic Policy Committee proclaimed, "House Republicans are simply trying to mislead the American public."

But Republicans flung the attacks right back, calling the $800 billion House Democratic alternative a reckless, budget-busting fantasy that even the AARP considers unrealistic. Democrats, bemoaned Republican Ways and Means Committee Chairman Bill Thomas, are "cynical enough to wave in front of seniors a program that is solely for a bumper-sticker campaign." Adds GOP pollster David Winston: "The public understands the difference between a real proposal and a pie-in-the-sky proposal."

The truth is, everybody's right—and wrong. Republicans want to pass any bill, even one too weak to do much good, to take the issue off the table. Democrats—who want the issue *on* the table for this fall's elections—don't want to pass any bill at all, which is why they're proposing one that's politically and fiscally unrealistic. "One of the biggest worries that our policy people had was that they'd actually write a good bill," admits a relieved Democratic operative. Now that Democrats can plausibly say they haven't, party leaders believe a prescription-drug stalemate will help overcome their election-year weaknesses on war and terrorism issues, especially since senior citizens make up a huge share of off-year turnout. But that may be wishful thinking. After years of tone deafness on the issue, Republicans have woken up to the potency of prescription drugs. They're still too beholden to the pharmaceutical industry to support the benefit voters want, but they've learned to dissemble skillfully enough to make it seem like they do. Enough so that Democrats hoping that prescription drugs will be their political Viagra may find that it fails them this fall.

Nothing gets Democrats more excited about their chances this November than the polling data on prescription drugs. Survey after survey tells them that seniors want Congress to pass a drug benefit soon and that they trust Democrats far more than the GOP to do it. "[It's] the issue on which Democrats have the biggest advantage," declares a June 26 memo from the Democratic polling firm Democracy Corps. Only Social Security comes close.

Of course, Democrats felt this way about prescription drugs two years ago, when a drug benefit was supposed to be one of their best mechanisms for winning back the House and the Senate—and for Al Gore to take the presidency. But Republicans, sensing danger, realized they could no longer simply oppose big-spending Democratic proposals; they needed to counter with a plan—any plan—of their own. In the spring of 2000 Republican pollster Glen Bolger memorably instructed his GOP allies, "It is more important to communicate that you have a plan [than] it is to communicate what is in the plan."

And they did just that. When the Democratic onslaught came—virtually every major Democratic candidate ran ads touting his or her support for a drug benefit—even Republicans noted for their hostility to new federal entitlements went soft and fuzzy on the issue. Suddenly devout conservatives like Nevada's John Ensign, Montana's Conrad Burns, and Virginia's George Allen all promised to help pass a drug plan. At the same time they attacked the Democratic proposals as big-government boondoggles; George W. Bush even made it sound as though Gore wanted to force seniors into HMOs.

A massive advertising blitz by big drug companies made the charges stick. According to *The Wall Street Journal*, drug companies spent $80 million on the 2000 election—twice the previous record for election-year corporate ad campaigns. In 26 House districts where big pharma ran ads on behalf of vulnerable Republican incumbents, only four lost. Former Kentucky Democratic Representative Scotty Baesler, for one, stopped airing ads on the subject after being relentlessly pounded on the issue, "They did a good job of neutralizing it," Baesler says. "The public was pretty confused about who was going to do what, and they sort of threw up their hands. You kept on trying to explain, but it was just a jumble." A frustrated Gore also de-emphasized prescription drugs late in the campaign and ultimately carried seniors by a mere 51 to 47 margin.

Democrats had better luck in Senate campaigns, which are more expensive and thus harder than House races for the drug industry to dominate. Most noteworthy, perhaps, was the narrow victory of Debbie Stabenow, who harped on prescription drugs, over Republican incumbent Spencer Abraham in Michigan. Even in that race, however, during those periods when Abraham outspent Stabenow he was able to turn a slight majority of voters against her plan. "Interviews with voters ... [found] evidence of considerable confusion about the alternative plans," wrote *The Washington Post*'s David Broder in October 2000. "Many voters fell back on their partisan leanings to resolve their doubts." Stabenow's pollster, Celinda Lake, found that on Election Day, 60 percent of Michigan voters said they had a harder time distinguishing the Senate candidates' positions

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A Twenty-first-Century Postal Service

ick Geddes is a research fellow at the Hoover Institution and a professor of policy nalysis and management at Cornell University.

The price of a first-class stamp will rise from 34 to 37 cents on June 30, 2002, on top of increases in January 1999 and January 2001. Consumers will thus pay billions in added postage. Yet even with the additional revenue and the $675 million Congress approved to offset the cost of the terrorist attacks, the U.S. Postal Service will continue to lose money.

It does not have to work like this. Whereas our postal service remains a government-owned monopoly, other countries have addressed similar concerns through privatization and limitations on, or elimination of, their postal monopolies. Sweden, Finland, New Zealand, and, most recently, the United Kingdom abolished their postal monopolies. Since 1997 all fifteen European Union countries have observed limits on their postal monopolies. Other countries, such as Norway and Australia, have limited their monopolies as well.

Large-scale postal privatization has also occurred. Shares in Germany's Deutsche Post were sold in that country's largest public offering of 2000. A majority of PTT Post, the postal service in the Netherlands, is now privately owned.

International reforms have had positive effects. The basic stamp price in Australia has remained constant, at 40 Australian cents, for ten years. New Zealand *lowered* its basic stamp price from 45 to 40 cents in 1995, and it has remained there ever since. **In contrast to the U.S. Postal Service, reformed postal services have been consistently profitable while paying standard business taxes.** Most reformed postal services have been able to downsize without mass layoffs, instead relying on attrition. Moreover, demonopolized postal services have not sacrificed delivery to rural areas.

Universal service is an important business asset, and firms facing competition have an incentive to maintain it.

Postal reform can enhance the welfare of employees as well as consumers. Employees can be offered shares in the new enterprise at a discount, encouraging employee stock ownership. Employees at all levels would then have a personal stake in the firm, improving its performance.

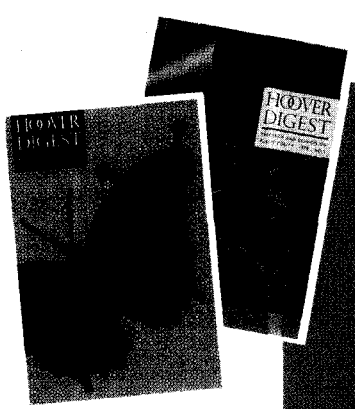
Issuing tradable ownership shares would give the postal service the incentive to maximize profits, creating a variety of social benefits. One of the postal service's problems is its lack of a clear purpose. Instead of pursuing a vague notion of "the public interest," the postal service would be accountable to a well-defined group: its owners.

Under private ownership the postal service would have incentives to reduce costs and become consumer-oriented through improved marketing techniques, adoption of more efficient technologies, improved operations, more effective corporate governance, heightened service quality, and the introduction of more new products. Managerial pay could be tied to reliable measures of firm performance, giving managers the incentive to become more entrepreneurial.

The U.S. Postal Service has been a government-owned monopoly for more than two hundred years, and awkward ways of doing business are entrenched. Vigorous postal reform would create social benefits large enough so that all groups—customers, employees, and taxpayers—would gain. It would follow successful examples in numerous other countries and create a dynamic structure for the postal service that is appropriate for the twenty-first century.

— Rick Geddes

Paid for by the Hoover Institution, Stanford University



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than they had before the race began. "You saw the Republicans really develop the strategy to come back on prescription drugs," Lake said in a post-election press briefing.

UNFORTUNATELY FOR DEMOCRATS, they are sure to be outspent in this year's midterms, thanks to the GOP's usual fund-raising advantage. Even worse, the drug industry is again dumping huge amounts of cash into congressional campaigns: By the time House Republicans were ready to bring their latest drug plan to a vote this week, the drug industry had largely underwritten nearly $5 million in advertising to defend vulnerable House GOP incumbents in 16 competitive House districts. One such ad, urging Iowa voters to "[t]hank Congressman [Jim] Nussle for fighting to add prescription drugs to Medicare," ran more than 100 times in the first ten days of the month, according to the *Journal*.

Republican pollsters sound confident. In an April PowerPoint presentation to congressional Republicans (those GOP strategy briefings have had a way of leaking lately), the Republican polling firm Public Opinion Strategies reassured GOPers that "[t]he Republican positioning on the prescription-drug issue is a break-even proposition." When the pollsters asked seniors whether they were more likely to agree with Republicans offering a drug benefit "that would cover lower income seniors, those seniors with no drug coverage at all, and any senior facing unusually high drug bills" versus a Democrat plan to cover every senior under Medicare, the respondents split 49 to 48. And that was before most had presumably seen the drug industry's slick ad barrage.

Democrats say they're wary of repeating that experience in 2000. "I think we were caught a little flat-footed," says Lake. And with Republicans getting better at masking their intentions, some Democrats worry that one of their most seemingly reliable issues could be in jeopardy. "We're very concerned about it," says a senior party strategist. "We've been talking about it all week."

This year's strategy is to strike harder and earlier at Republicans as pawns of the drug industry—winning free media coverage about the GOP-industry connection—and thus avoid the mind-numbing policy debates that muddied the issue in 2000. "The mistake we make is when we start talking about the donut hole, and the gap in the coverage, and the size of the deductibles—you can't get bogged down in that," says the strategist. "What you really want to drive home is that Republicans are going to put forward a bill that's put forward by the pharmaceutical companies."

But not everyone is so hopeful. "The pollsters have always tried to convince Democrats that Social Security and prescription drugs are our twin pillars," says Democratic Representative Cal Dooley of California, who is working on a centrist drug plan he hopes to introduce later this summer. "But you know what? We haven't done very well with older voters. Because the issues become very, very muddled at the end of the day." Just the way Republicans like it. ■

Ashcroft goes over the edge.

Private Enemy

By JEFFREY ROSEN

IT IS JUNE 2005. As chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, Vermont Democrat Patrick Leahy goes on a fact-finding mission to Guantanamo Bay, where he meets with Al Qaeda prisoners of war. Furious over Leahy's refusal to confirm federal judges, President George W. Bush plots revenge. When Leahy arrives at Washington Dulles International Airport, he is arrested by military police on the grounds that he has passed information to the enemy and is therefore an enemy combatant. Leahy is imprisoned at the Naval Station Brig at Norfolk, Virginia, and is told he will remain there until the president decides that the war on terrorism has ended. Leahy files a writ of habeas corpus in federal court, demanding the government provide evidence that he is an enemy combatant or release him. But a federal judge refuses to grant Leahy a hearing. The judge agrees with the Bush administration that once the president has determined a citizen is an enemy combatant, the decision can't be reviewed in any court.

The scenario is imaginary, but the legal claim is not. It appears in a remarkable brief filed by the Bush administration last week in the case of Yaser Hamdi, an American citizen seized in Afghanistan, transferred to Guantanamo Bay, and now being detained in Virginia as an enemy combatant. "[C]ourts may not second-guess the military's determination that an individual is an enemy combatant and should be detained as such," the administration writes. This position is not only legally unprecedented; it is unnecessary. No court would second-guess the administration's conclusion that Hamdi, who was seized on the battlefield after his Taliban unit was defeated, is an enemy combatant. But if the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit agrees with the administration in the Hamdi case, it could set a precedent that would give the president unreviewable power to imprison citizens indefinitely and exclude them from the legal system during a war that may last for decades.

Why would the administration stake out such an unnecessarily extreme position? Here is one possibility: In an unpublished ruling, the judge in the John Walker Lindh case recently held that the FBI's interrogation of Hamdi contained information that might prove exculpatory for Lindh. Therefore, ruled the judge, Lindh's lawyers had a right to interview Hamdi—subject to the consent of Hamdi's lawyer Frank Dunham, the able federal public defender in Virginia. But Dunham can't give his consent without first meeting with Hamdi or at least being present during the interview. Perhaps for this reason, the government has tried to prevent Dunham from meeting with his client at all costs. As part of the same strategy, when a judge ordered that Dunham be

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allowed to meet with Hamdi to challenge his detention, the government persuaded the appellate court that since Dunham had never met Hamdi, he couldn't properly represent him. Dunham tried to escape this catch-22 by filing another action with the approval of Hamdi's father, who clearly has standing to authorize Dunham to represent his son's interests. Despite the father's efforts, however, the government has asked the appellate court to block Dunham from meeting with Hamdi once more.

ANOTHER POSSIBILITY IS that the government is trying to preserve its flexibility in cases involving the detention of other citizens, such as José Padilla, whom the government accuses of plotting to build a dirty bomb. Padilla's classification as an enemy combatant is more debatable than Hamdi's: He was seized at O'Hare International Airport; and because the government didn't have enough evidence to try him for conspiracy, it initially held him in New York as a material witness before calling him an enemy combatant and transferring him to military prison in South Carolina. The government may want to avoid sharing the facts that led to Padilla's designation as an enemy combatant because that would reveal too much about its intelligence sources. By arguing for a blanket rule that citizens can never challenge their enemy-combatant designation in federal court, the administration might also be trying to avoid a debate about whether the information in cases like Padilla's should be classified and what the standard of proof should be.

Whatever its reasons, the government's claim is legally unconvincing. The administration cites two cases on behalf of its position; but neither settles the question, because there was never a dispute about whether or not the prisoners were enemy combatants. During World War II an American citizen fighting with the Italian army was among the aliens captured on the battlefields of Sicily, and a federal court held that he could be detained in the United States as a prisoner of war. But since the court found that he was wearing an Italian army uniform, his status as an enemy combatant, unlike Padilla's, was never in question. In another case from World War II, the Supreme Court held that German soldiers who were captured in China in 1945, tried by an American military commission, and serving sentences in Germany couldn't have their convictions reviewed in the United States. The Court was concerned that giving enemy aliens captured abroad the right to demand a hearing in the United States would disrupt the war effort. But the same logic doesn't apply to a captive whom the government has chosen voluntarily to bring to the United States. In fact, Hamdi may have been transported from Guantanamo Bay to Virginia precisely because the government feared that, as a citizen, he might be able to demand a review of his detention in Guantanamo, which could expose the entire camp to scrutiny by federal courts.

Unlike enemy combatants in World War II, who clearly identified themselves by wearing uniforms, our new enemies willfully violate the laws of war, making it harder to determine who is a combatant and who is not. This should lead courts to give the president substantial deference in identifying the enemy within, but it also raises a real danger that individual citizens might be wrongly detained. The way to resolve this conflict isn't by preventing judges from reviewing the president's determinations but by ensuring that hearings are conducted in ways that preserve national security interests.

The standard of proof in these hearings should be as deferential to the president as possible. In fact, most judges would uphold the president's designation of a citizen as an enemy combatant if there is any colorable evidence to support the claim. In Hamdi's case, once the government establishes that he was caught red-handed on the battlefield in Afghanistan, the hearing might well be over.

But in the case of Padilla, where the government may have legitimate concerns about revealing its intelligence sources even to Padilla's lawyers, more sensitive hearings might be necessary. Furthermore, ordinary federal judges may not be trained to evaluate intelligence information; or, in their eagerness to defer to the military, they might water down the standards of proof that apply in ordinary civil cases. For this reason, Ruth Wedgwood of Yale Law School has argued that Congress could authorize the secret Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act court to review all challenges to a citizen's designation as an enemy combatant. Hearings before this court are held outside the presence of the prisoner's lawyer, and the court could apply the same standard it applies in other foreign-intelligence surveillance cases, asking whether there is probable cause to believe that the accused is an enemy combatant.

IN A FORTHCOMING article in *Constitutional Commentary*, Jack Goldsmith and Cass R. Sunstein of the University of Chicago explore a paradox: Compared with Abraham Lincoln, Woodrow Wilson, and Franklin Roosevelt, they note, the Bush administration has diminished relatively few civil liberties. At the same time, opinionmakers such as *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times* have been far more critical of Bush's actions than they were of similar actions by FDR. One explanation, Goldsmith and Sunstein suggest, is that "the nation is now far less trusting of government, and far more solicitous of the accused, than it was sixty years ago." Another explanation, however, may have to do with the conduct of the administration itself. Having learned from Wilson's mistakes during World War I, Roosevelt went out of his way to give the appearance of caring about civil liberties. His attorney general, Francis Biddle, was a member of the ACLU; the administration didn't prosecute people who were critical of the war, as Wilson had, nor did it pursue the most aggressive legal claims in cases involving Nazi saboteurs. As a result, Roosevelt was treated far more tenderly than Wilson by this magazine and by others. By contrast, the Bush administration—while committing fewer actual abuses—has repeatedly asserted the most sweeping unilateral power to do whatever it likes in cases involving military tribunals and the detention of citizens. In addition to raising public suspicions, this risks creating bad legal precedents that could linger after the war is over.

The stakes in the Hamdi case are far greater than those

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presented by the recent debate about military tribunals. Indeed, the administration seems to have concluded that it doesn't need to try enemy combatants in military tribunals since it can detain them indefinitely instead. (The only advantage of a military trial as opposed to indefinite detention is the possibility of execution, but that is almost certainly outweighed by the risk of not being able to prove the case.) Now that citizens arrested in the United States may be detained indefinitely during the course of an undeclared war that could last decades, it would be politically—as well as legally—wise for the administration to seek Congress's support, which would almost certainly be granted. Together, the president and Congress should draft specific rules governing how long a citizen can be detained after being designated an enemy combatant and when a military review board must determine whether he is likely to be dangerous in the future. The procedure could be modeled on the process apparently going on now in Guantanamo Bay to decide whether to repatriate prisoners. Although the president may have the raw legal power to detain citizens indefinitely as long as their status as enemy combatants is confirmed by courts, he would be on far more solid political ground if he enlisted the support of Congress.

"The masses of any people, however intelligent, are very little moved by abstract principles of humanity and justice, until those principles are interpreted for them by the stinging commentary of some infringement upon their own rights," the critic James Russell Lowell wrote in an 1884 essay on Lincoln and civil liberties. In the short term, in fact, President Bush's detention of citizens may provoke little more public protest than his detention of aliens. But after the war is over, the legal precedents the administration is trying to establish will be seen as unnecessary as well as vulnerable to abuse. By rejecting this ill-advised claim, the federal appeals court in Virginia can give the president all the power he needs, while saving his administration from its worst impulses. ■

Kabul Dispatch

Hiding Place

By Elizabeth Rubin

"Your life is over. It's time to see you buried in your grave." This was the warm welcome painted a few days ago on the home of a man who had run in the provincial elections to choose delegates for this month's *loya jirga*. He had dared to run against Abdul Rasoul Sayyaf, a long-bearded, Saudi-backed fundamentalist and leader of the mujahedin who have been waging war to establish an Islamic state in Afghanistan for decades. The man lost.

Elizabeth Rubin covered the war in Afghanistan for The New Republic.

Sayyaf is an Islamic scholar, renowned for his eloquent oratory in Arabic and Persian. At the loya jirga, dressed in his long, white robes, he delivered an emotionally arousing speech ripe with verses from the Koran, in which he managed to proclaim the Afghan transitional government an Islamic one. Afghan-American delegates, intellectuals from across the country, and many Afghan women were alarmed by the ease with which Sayyaf and his fundamentalist ilk insinuated themselves back into the Afghan political scene. For though the U.N. rules required anyone interested in running as a delegate to the loya jirga to affirm that he had not taken part in human rights abuses, there sat Sayyaf and his fellow warlords in the front row under the U.N.'s white tent. And U.N. and Western diplomats had helped them get there, arguing that an accurate representation of the population includes warlords and fundamentalists and that their presence at the grand tribal council was indispensable to future peace. Maybe. But for many Afghans—and for most Kabulis—the men who helped demolish Kabul, slaughter its civilians, and disgrace its women in their pursuit of power don't evoke images of democratic representation; they evoke memories of misery and fear.

One of those Kabulis is Abdul Nasim, a 40-year-old delegate from Kabul's historic district who decided to take the West's invitation to democracy literally. After departing a Communist prison in 1988, he had gone to Pakistan with his wife and four children. In Pakistan he had two shoe-making factories and a shop making colorfully painted aluminum boxes. Six months ago a friend from prison, now chairman of the Kabul municipality, told him, "We need you," and convinced him to come home to work for the government as the political director of Kabul's security apparatus.

On the fourth day of the loya jirga, Nasim, in a blue blazer and a traditional *salwar kameez* shirt and pants, stood at the podium—just a few feet from the warlords and "fundis" (as internationals here call the fundamentalists)—and stunned his audience with his brave, dangerous words. For four days, speaker after speaker had begun with praises for the mujahedin and the martyrs of the Taliban war—Ahmad Shah Massoud and Abdul Haq (over whose memory Hamid Karzai teared up during his speech). Nasim said that yes, they must be praised. "But who," he asked, "is giving honors to Kabul, which suffered during those years, and who is giving honors to the women of Kabul, who've been deprived of their rights?" Invoking a verse from the Koran that says humanity is created "equal before God," Nasim added: "It doesn't matter if you were a Communist or mujahed."

Next he commented on the record of Karzai's Tajik-dominated interim government in achieving national unity. "When one of our sisters comes to our office," he said, "they ask her, 'Where are you from?' before knowing her qualifications. If a man applies for a job and he's from the South"—and therefore Pashtun—"they don't ask about his qualifications. He will get nothing. If this is national unity, we don't want this."

Then he touched the mullahs. Some of the rules of Islam,

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he said, are interpreted as saying that women have incomplete, weak minds. "But I was born in the bosom of a woman; and if she's weak-minded, I have no intelligence at all," he shouted. The 160 or so Afghan women in the audience rose up and clapped and hooted. The men were silent.

A few hours after his speech I saw Nasim outside the tent offering a few diplomatic words to a radio journalist. When I asked how I could find him, he glanced at the fierce-faced intelligence men openly videotaping, taking notes, and photographing dissenters of all breeds—including Nasim, who had spoken against Karzai's government. "You can't," he said. Then he quietly gave the location of his brother's box-making shop in Kabul and rushed off amidst bouquets of praise for his courage.

It wasn't long before Nasim encountered trouble. First came his old prison friend who'd coaxed him back from Pakistan to work in the government. Nasim says, "He told me, 'You are directly against our policies, and you'll never get away with it.'" Then came the mullahs. "They said, 'You're against *sharia*; you're like Salman Rushdie, an infidel.' And at lunchtime, the mullahs sued me." Then came a U.N. official working for the loya jirga commission. "He took me and said, 'We have information that Sayyaf's men are going to kidnap you.'" That night armed men came knocking at his home, twice. Nasim was already in hiding.

Nasim is not alone. His predicament resembles that of Dr. Sima Samar, the interim minister of women's affairs over the past year and a half, who was also declared Afghanistan's Salman Rushdie by the mullahs for an interview she gave in Canada, in which she allegedly criticized *sharia*. The night after the loya jirga, rumors sped through Kabul's streets and hotels that Samar had been assassinated. Another rumor suggested that a delegate's wife had been killed. (Everyone assumed it was Nasim's.) In fact, neither rumor was true. But Samar agreed under pressure to step down from her highly political post as women's minister to direct the new commission on human rights—a lower-profile position.

A FEW DAYS after the loya jirga, when most of the delegates had packed up and gone back to their provinces, I went to the Old City hoping to find Nasim's brother's shop. There you can catch a glimpse of why so many Afghans hungered for the return of King Zahir Shah and the peaceable days he symbolized. The majestic buildings are destroyed; where about 100,000 people used to live only 1,500 to 2,000 remain, most without electricity or running water. Tucked inside an alleyway I found a box-making shop, where blackened-faced children laughed and hammered together aluminum trunks. A middle-aged man said that yes, it was the right shop; but no one would offer information about Nasim. His brother, they said, was out collecting money from his other shops. The next day I went back, and a note was waiting with the number of a U.N. officer.

That night I found Nasim sitting at the edge of a small canvas tent, where he's now sleeping, in the garden of the U.N.'s loya jirga office. The moon was full over the Kabuli hills, and despite his fear Nasim retained a sense of humor. After his speech, he said, Zalmay Khalilzad, the American special envoy, asked him how he had the courage to say such words. "I told Khalilzad, 'You gave me this courage. I was in Peshawar, and you all said there are ISAF [international troops] in Kabul, the security is good, so come back; and you said at this loya jirga you can say what you want—it's free and independent.'"

NAÏVE OR NOT, Nasim had no idea his words would spark such a fury. But after the loya jirga ended, he was invited to the palace that serves as the seat of government—whether for intimidation or for assurance is unclear. There Nasim was confronted by General Mohammed Fahim, now the defense minister and vice president; Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, still the foreign minister; and Younis Qanooni—the wild card of the loya jirga and a favorite of Westerners—who shocked the loya jirga when he resigned as minister of interior and shocked everyone again when he protested his appointment as minister of education, prompting police loyal to him to block the new minister of interior from assuming office. Here's how Nasim recalled their words:

> KARZAI: My dear son, what problems do you have? What have you faced? Why didn't you come to the Afghans instead of the foreigners?
> GENERAL FAHIM (*in threatening tones*): Be thankful you're alive.
> DR. ABDULLAH ABDULLAH: No, no; you did well. ["Dr. Abdullah encouraged me. Like a father to his son," recalled Nasim.] You told the truth, and you disclosed the hidden things and exposed it in front of our eyes. You did well, and we are satisfied that you informed us about the terrible situation of the people. It's reality. You did well my son.

Nasim also had an hour-and-a-half meeting with the new interior minister, Taj Mohammad Wardak, an elderly Pashtun from Paktia province. Nasim began to laugh recalling Wardak's words. When the U.N. officer accompanying Nasim asked Wardak to protect Nasim, "He [Wardak] said, 'We are too weak. This isn't a private case. You have exposed many political figures, and therefore the clergy turned this into a religious case, that you're an infidel.' He [Wardak] said, 'I'm not strong enough to do anything for you. ... Give me five or six months to establish a strong police force, then he [Nasim] should come back and I'll give him protection.'"

The people sitting with Nasim in the garden laughed. Confidence in Karzai and in his new Cabinet has drained from the Afghan streets. Many fear the worst. When Dostum, the Uzbek leader and sometime warlord from Mazar-e-Sharif, offered Nasim 20 bodyguards, a home, and a job, Nasim politely refused. Why? In the last few days there have been minor skirmishes in Mazar; and as Nasim put it, Dostum is also weak. His rival in Mazar, Atta Mohammed—a fundamentalist—is aligned with Karzai's Cabinet and, particularly, with Fahim.

So ever since the speech Nasim has been under U.N. protection. Every day someone from the U.N. stops by to see him and to ask what he wants to do. "I told Jean Arnaud"—

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the deputy to Lakhdar Brahimi, the U.N.'s special representative—"'At the loya jirga you called me a champion and hero, but today you keep me in a tent.' Today they sent another representative who asked me the same question, and I told her, 'This is the first case for you people who call yourself human rights protectors, and I wonder what you'll do if terror, kidnapping, assassination, and brutality happens all around Afghanistan? How can you give security to those who suffer these violations of human rights if you can't provide protection for one individual?'"

Nasim has sold his car and sent his wife and children back to Pakistan, though he hasn't told them why. Wardak warned him not to go with them. "He said [that] if the fundamentalist clergy discover I insulted *sharia*, my life won't be safe there either." When I asked him what his punishment would be, Nasim was silent for a moment. And then he said, "Death."

Curfew was nearing, and as I got up to leave, Nasim said, "I like my life. I don't want to be dead because we don't have freedom to speak. I don't want my children to be orphans. They need the love of their father. Are you going to do anything?" But there is no protective infrastructure in Afghanistan—no churches, human rights organizations, or embassies—and so he sleeps under the moon in the garden of the U.N. offices in Kabul. ■

Germany's best party collapses.

Blue Greens

By JOHN B. JUDIS

BERLIN, GERMANY

IT'S EVENING, AND the only light on the second floor of Jakob-Kaiser-Haus, the building where members of the Bundestag have their offices, is coming from Cem Oezdemir's suite. Inside, the 36-year-old Oezdemir, who in 1994 became the first person of Turkish descent ever elected to the Bundestag, is describing his hopes for Germany. "What is my goal? It is the kind of hyphenated identity that takes place in your country," he says. "I am Moslem by birth; I am a Moslem like Catholics are Catholics. I am a German citizen of Turkish origin and Muslim religion."

Oezdemir is a member of the Green Party, which he first joined at age 15. That Oezdemir, a kind of Turkish-German equivalent of a 1950s-era African American civil rights activist, chose the Greens says a lot about the party—all of it good. The Greens are the only German party unabashedly promoting an American-style immigration system, which would offer citizenship and integration to Germany's long-marginalized minorities. They have also taken the lead in promoting energy conservation and women's rights. Once merely a left-wing protest movement, the Greens have in the last decade shed their eco-utopianism and dogmatic pacifism and have become a competitive, responsible political party. In 1998, in a historic move, Gerhard Schroeder's Social Democratic Party (SPD) invited the Greens into government. The Greens' leader, Joschka Fischer, has become foreign minister, a position in which he has distinguished himself through his aggressive support for military intervention in the Balkans and Afghanistan and for the eastward expansion of the European Union.

That's the good news. The bad news is that in the four years since the Greens' ascension, the party has been in political free fall. Its share of the vote has dropped in 17 straight state elections. (Germany, like the United States, is a federation of states, each with its own government.) And if the polls are to be believed, the Greens have been displaced by the pro-business Free Democratic Party (FDP) as Germany's third-largest party. The FDP currently enjoys as much as 12 percent support in national polls for this September's parliamentary election, while the Greens have fallen to 6 percent. Unless the Greens engineer a dramatic comeback, they will be ousted from government this fall. And if their support falls below 5 percent, they will, according to Germany's system of proportional representation, lose all their seats in the Bundestag. Without the Greens, German politics will lose its most important voice against both the rising xenophobia of the German right and against the rising anti-globalization militancy of the hard left. And in a country in which economic stagnation is feeding these furies, that absence would be costly indeed.

ALTHOUGH THE FIRST Green Party sprung up in (of all places) Tasmania, the international movement took much of its inspiration from the German Greens. Established in 1979 by a group that included Fischer, future parliamentary leader Petra Kelly, sculptor Joseph Beuys, and philosopher Rudolf Bahro, the Greens brought together Germany's burgeoning environmental and anti-nuclear movements and a motley assortment of other postwar radicalisms, including radical feminism, Maoism, and pacifism. In 1983 Germany became the first European country to elect a Green to parliament; the following year the party won seven seats in the European Parliament—more than all of Europe's other Green parties put together.

The Greens also provided many of the ideological underpinnings of the international movement. Bahro was the movement's first philosopher. A former East German Communist functionary, he had been jailed in 1977 for outlining a neo-Marxist, but democratic, alternative to East Germany's "really existing socialism." After his release in 1979 Bahro emigrated to the Federal Republic, where he propounded an ecological post-Marxism that called on capitalists and the proletariat to unite to save the planet. The Green's first platform in 1980 advocated that "[t]he capitalist and state-communist economic modes must be replaced by a reasonable alternative based on frugal and equitable exchange with the materials and forces of nature, a resolute

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eradication of social privileges, and the realization of technology on a humane scale." There was also widespread agreement that NATO should be dissolved and the German military disbanded.

But if the German Greens were initially characterized by otherworldly utopianism, the party gradually clawed its way toward real-world respectability. During the '80s the party was bitterly divided between "Fundis," or Fundamentalists, and "Realos," or Realists. The Fundis, dominated by Marxists and radical ecologists, wanted the Greens to remain a movement that would make non-negotiable demands on the capitalist state and then, when they were not met, take to the streets. They insisted that elected party officials rotate out of office after two years and shunned coalitions with the SPD. Fischer's Realos, by contrast, argued for a competitive political party that sought governing coalitions with the SPD and moderated many of the party's radical planks—such as its demand for immediate withdrawal from NATO.

By the end of the '80s the Realos had won the organizational battle; Green legislators no longer had to rotate out of office, and the party's elected leadership increasingly became its political leadership. But the ideological battle continued through the '90s and was only conclusively resolved this March when the Greens drafted a new party platform that superseded their 1980 document. The same party that had called on German soldiers to desert during the Gulf war buildup now supported sending them to Afghanistan. And the party that had pronounced capitalism incompatible with planetary well-being has now promised to meet its environmental demands within a "social-market economy."

In its initial years the Green Party grew rapidly despite its internal divisions, winning office in six states from 1980 to 1983; and in the 1983 federal elections they boosted their 1980 total fourfold to 5.6 percent. In the early '80s the Greens essentially exploited the political vacuum left by the SPD and the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), both of whom slighted environmental and feminist concerns and supported the Ronald Reagan administration's cold war agenda. And the party's demographic constituency reflected its ideological focus: Its support was heavily concentrated among college students and recent graduates. About 60 percent of Green voters were under age 35, and 80 percent were under age 45.

BUT TO THE surprise of many, as the '80s gave way to the '90s, and these young Greens grew older and took white-collar and civil service jobs, they continued to vote for the Greens. The typical Green voter became a 35- to 40-year-old, college-educated working woman. And while the Fundis continued to make trouble (throwing paint at Fischer in a May 1999 Green Party convention called to debate the party's support for NATO intervention in Kosovo), the Realos moved the party further and further toward the moral and political center.

The SPD and CDU responded to the Greens' rise by trying to co-opt their agenda. After the Chernobyl nuclear disaster in 1986, the SPD called for the "beginning of the end of nuclear power." And both the SPD and CDU elevated women into their parliamentary leadership and began championing new parental-leave and rape legislation. But the SPD remained too oriented toward blue-collar unionism to appeal to the Greens' middle-class constituents; and the CDU and its Bavarian branch, the Christian Social Union, were too socially conservative. The Greens' biggest competitor, in fact, was Germany's longtime third party, the libertarian, pro-business FDP, who had long enjoyed support from college-educated professionals. But more and more, these voters were attracted to the Greens' idealism and repelled by the FDP's self-definition as "the party of the well-off." In 1994 the Greens surpassed the FDP, garnering 7.3 percent of the vote, compared with the FDP's 6.9 percent. In 1998 the Greens' vote declined to 6.7 percent, but the FDP's fell to 6.2 percent. With Schroeder's SPD outpacing Helmut Kohl's CDU, the Greens gained their first-ever taste of power.

SINCE THEN, HOWEVER, the FDP has begun to right itself—it has mounted personality-driven American-style campaigns that present its free-market agenda as benefiting all Germans. And the Greens have begun to falter. Perhaps the biggest reason is the party's lack of a clear economic agenda. The Greens had always presented themselves as the post-materialist party of ecology, social equality, grassroots democracy, and nonviolence—never of jobs. That was fine when Germany's unemployment rate was less than 5 percent, but it became an enormous liability in the late '90s.

In 1998, with the economy floundering, the Greens proposed tripling the price of gasoline in order to reduce German oil consumption—a callous plan that backfired monumentally. In the crucial May 2000 elections in North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany's most populous state, the Green vote fell from 10 percent to 7 percent, while the FDP's rose from 4 percent to 10 percent. And in elections this April in the economically depressed Eastern state of Saxony-Anhalt, the Greens polled 2 percent, while the FDP—which ran on a promise to create jobs—garnered 13 percent, and the former Communists of the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS) won 20 percent. The Greens' only significant electoral success in the last four years has been in Freiburg, a prosperous university town where a Green candidate won the mayoral contest this May. Why did the Greens do so well in Freiburg? Perhaps because it's known as the solar-energy capital of Europe.

German voters have also rejected the Greens because of their outspoken support for immigration reform. The party has long advocated allowing any child of immigrants born in Germany to choose to become a citizen. But Oezdemir acknowledges, "Today the majority does not accept that. They still see the future of the country as the future of Germans." That became painfully obvious last September in Hamburg, where an election dominated by fear of immigrant crime saw the Greens plummet from 14 percent to 8.5 percent of the vote and saw a new, anti-immigrant Law and Order Party garner nearly 20 percent.

And while the Greens have lost mainstream support because of their views on immigration and the environment, their renunciation of pacifism has prompted defections from

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young voters, many of whom identify with the radical left. Some of these ex-Greens back the formerly Communist PDS, which opposed German intervention in Afghanistan. Others have turned to militant, anti-globalization groups like ATTAC, which is reputed to have as many as 10,000 German supporters and which led the street protests against President George W. Bush's visit in May. When Green Chairwoman Claudia Roth tried to address a rally before the protests, young demonstrators stormed the stage, accusing the Greens of being "warmongers" and "hypocrites."

With the party tanking at the polls, some left-wing intellectuals say the entire Realo effort to turn the Greens into a mainstream party should now be abandoned. Margit Mayer, a political scientist at the Free University of Berlin and co-editor of *The German Greens*, blames the Greens' difficulties on their decision "to follow the logic of a political party, that is, subject themselves to the rules of party competition and give up the social-movement side of their origin." But it would be a grave mistake for the Greens to try to recreate their movement past, which was based on an illusion of apocalyptic change. And embracing the Fundi policies of ATTAC or of Ralph Nader's retrograde American Greens (who denounced their German counterparts' support for the war in Afghanistan) would be even more disastrous.

The far better strategy, politically and morally, is to follow Fischer's realism to its logical extension and become a "third way" party modeled after Tony Blair's "new Labour." A faction called the "new Greens" thinks the party should push the neoliberal economic agenda that SPD Prime Minister Schroeder proposed in 1998 but abandoned in the face of pressure from Germany's powerful labor unions. These "new Greens" remain committed to a strong welfare state but want to modify regulations that impede economic growth. And while committed to energy conservation, they would pursue it through market incentives. Combine that economic agenda with Fischer's internationalism and Oezdemir's support for immigration reform, and you have an intriguing, even inspiring, political party—the kind of party that Germany, mired in a decade-long slump and suffering a rising tide of nativism, desperately needs.

That party won't be competing in this fall's election, however. Still burdened by its roots in the post-materialist left, the Greens aren't yet aggressively advocating a sensible agenda for market-based economic growth. And unless the party offers jobs to an ailing German electorate, it will remain unpalatable or irrelevant to voters outside places like Freiburg. The challenge will come after the Greens' near-certain drubbing this September. If the Greens use their defeat to finally transform themselves into a party of conservation, democracy, and prosperity, they could offer just the kind of moral and economic alternative Germany needs to dig itself out of its deep and troubling malaise. If they don't, that task will be left to others—a frightening prospect because, today at least, Germany's political landscape resembles the second floor of Jakob-Kaiser-Haus on the night I visited Cem Oezdemir. Only one light is on. ■

How despair is transforming Israel.

The Wall

By YOSSI KLEIN HALEVI

JERUSALEM, ISRAEL

"THE WORLD HATES us and always will," a neighbor said to me on the stairs before wishing me a good day. "What more do you need than the Holocaust?" He is Sephardi, without familial memory of Europe; but the bitter, new mood of besieged Israel has penetrated everywhere. In a full-page newspaper ad urging Israelis to boycott European nations that now refuse to sell Israel military equipment, employees of the country's military industry wrote, "In the moments of truth, we learn yet again that we can only rely on ourselves." Even the left isn't immune from the growing sense of siege. In a recent interview, the liberal novelist Amos Oz confessed he's haunted by his father's observation that, before the Holocaust, European graffiti read, "JEWS TO PALESTINE," only to be transformed in our time into, "JEWS OUT OF PALESTINE." The message to Jews, noted Oz: "Don't be here and don't be there. That is, don't be."

While international concern is focusing on the physical wall, along the length of the West Bank, that Israel is now building to ward off suicide bombers, Israelis have been increasingly concerned about the invisible wall of isolation that is rising between the Jewish state and much of the world. Israelis haven't felt so alone since the mid-'70s, when the United Nations declared that Zionism equaled racism and when more nations maintained diplomatic relations with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) than with the Jewish state. The eagerness with which most of the world adopted the Palestinian account of the Camp David talks and dismissed Israel's previously unimaginable concessions as irrelevant; the U.N.'s obsessive search for a nonexistent massacre in Jenin even as it ignores the massacres of Israelis; Europe's growing sympathy for suicide killers and its simplistic reduction of the conflict to occupation; anti-Zionism's emergence, since the Durban anti-racism conference, as a defining feature of the anti-globalization movement; the application of traditional Christian anti-Jewish imagery to the Palestinian conflict (like the new

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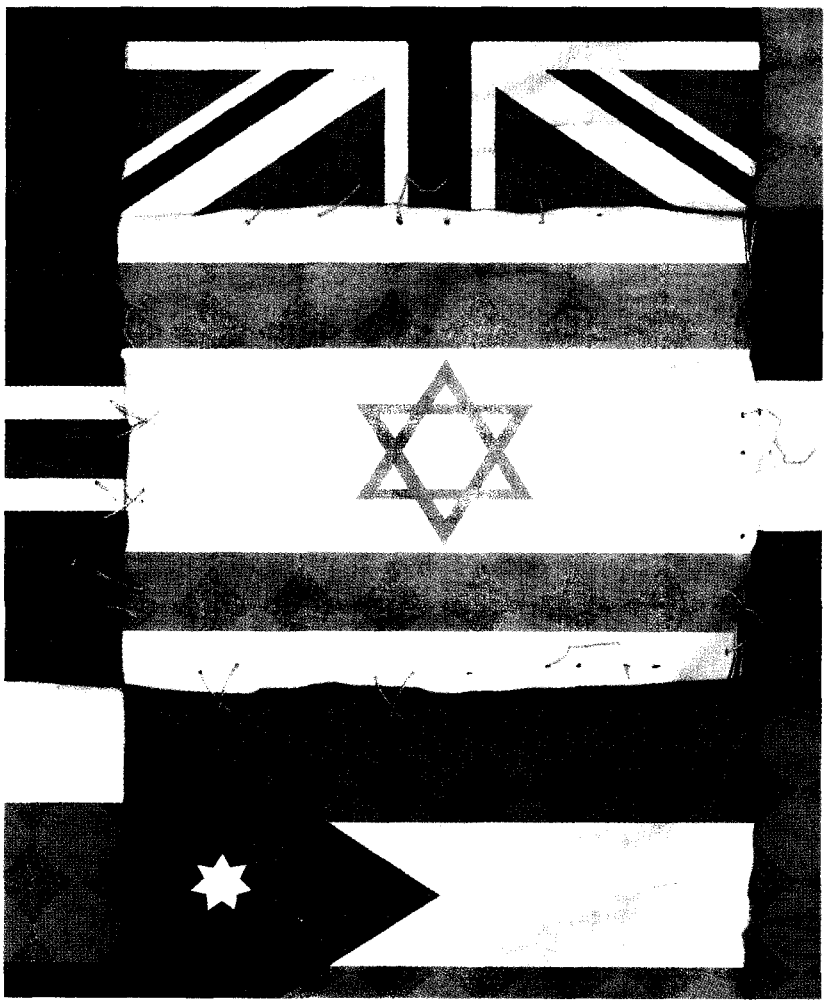
mural in a Scottish church depicting a crucified Jesus surrounded by Israeli soldiers)—all have convinced many Israelis that collective Jewish existence is again on probation. Last year, after the collapse of the Camp David talks and the renewal of anti-Jewish frenzy in the Arab world, Israelis began to suspect that the Middle East might never accept a Jewish state, no matter what its borders. After all, denial of the most basic elements of the Jewish story—from the biblical connection to the land of Israel to the existence of the gas chambers—has become routine in much of the Arab world. But in the last few months Israeli despair has broadened. Israelis now fear not only that they will never be accepted in the Middle East, but also that they will never be accepted in the world at large.

ALONG WITH RETURNING the Jews to their land, a key Zionist goal was returning the Jews to the community of nations. Addressing the U.N. General Assembly in 1949, Israeli Foreign Minister Moshe Sharett declared that Israel's admission into the world body was "the consummation of a people's transition ... from exclusion to membership in the family of nations."

But today Israelis fear the transition is happening in reverse. "The suspicion slips into the heart that maybe the ultra-Orthodox were right when they warned that a sovereign state for Jews would annoy the nations and bring annihilation on the remnant of the Jewish people," wrote Peggy Cidor, a former left-wing activist, in *Kol Hazman*, a secular Jerusalem newspaper. "The state of Israel, which was intended to give the Jews an entry ticket into the family of nations, didn't deliver the goods. We're still being judged by separate standards; there is still no proportion between our actions and the responses around the world.... It was nice to feel like everyone else for a while, but that seems to be over.... The state of Israel has turned into the 'Jew' of the nations."

That last phrase—among the bitterest ever written by a Zionist—was first used by the late Israeli scholar of intellectual history J.L. Talmon in an essay in THE NEW REPUBLIC, written in 1976 in response to the "Zionism=Racism" resolution. Now, though, the bitterness may run even deeper, precisely because many Israelis believed international stigmatization of the Jewish state had ended. In the 1990s Israel seemed to finally be realizing the old Zionist dream of normalization; Jews would be neither chosen, nor outcast, but simply a nation among nations. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the United Nations in 1991 rescinded the Zionism=Racism resolution, and key nations—including India, China, and the entire former Soviet bloc—resumed relations with the Jewish state. Israelis reciprocated, tempering their defiant independence with a sense of global interdependence. With far greater enthusiasm than in the past, they joined international relief efforts, raising funds for Somali famine victims and Turkish earthquake survivors. The Israeli press even debated whether the Israeli army should participate in international peacekeeping missions. A new prosperity allowed Israelis to become travelers. Tens of thousands of young Israelis participated in the post-army ritual of backpacking in India, and Indian spirituality came to influence Israeli popular culture. In their new identification with far-off places, Israelis displayed a new embrace of the world.

At times Israelis revealed an overeager provincialness, as in 1993 when the local media turned the opening of the country's first McDonald's into a major cultural event. Still, as the world opened up for Israelis, their sense of permanent ostracism began to recede. Many quietly stopped using the ugly word "goy" to describe gentiles or stopped referring to the nations outside Israel as "the world," as if Jews inhabited a separate planet. After the 1982 Sabra and Shatilla massacre, says Aharon Klieman, professor of diplomacy at Tel Aviv University, former Prime Minster Menachem Begin dismissed criticism of Israel by noting, "Goyim kill goyim, and they blame the Jews." "Can you imagine Rabin or even Sharon using the word 'goyim'?" asks Klieman. "Israelis learned to make distinctions among nations." Yitzhak Rabin caught the new ethos in his inaugural speech as prime



DENNIS NISHI

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minister in 1992: "No longer is it true that 'the whole world is against us,'" he declared. "We must overcome the sense of isolation that has held us in its thrall for almost half a century. We must join the international movement for peace, reconciliation, and cooperation that is spreading over the entire globe these days—lest we be the last to remain, all alone in the station." Israelis were adopting a new national vision; the millennia-old dynamic of Jewish separatism and gentile ostracism seemed about to end.

But now the world is closing up again. I know Israelis who hesitate to write their home address on their luggage when they travel to Europe. When some Norwegian supermarket chains recently announced plans to mark Israeli products so customers could consider boycotting them, a spokesman for the normally understated Israeli Foreign Ministry caustically suggested that the chains use yellow stars. Increasingly, Israelis and the rest of humanity are speaking mutually unintelligible languages of moral outrage. Liberal-minded foreigners can't understand how Israelis elected Ariel Sharon, and many have taken his election as license to view every Israeli act of self-defense as aggression. Israelis can't understand how the world has forgotten the circumstances that produced Sharon's election: Yasir Arafat's terrorist war, launched in September 2000, against the most left-wing government in Israel's history.

THE LAST TIME Israelis felt this besieged, in the mid-'70s during Zionism=Racism and the widespread severing of diplomatic ties that followed the Yom Kippur War and the Arab oil boycott, the political and social consequences were formidable. In 1977 a right-wing coalition of outsiders, led by Begin, unseated the Labor Party, which since Israel's founding had never lost a national election. The settlement movement, which until the 1973 Yom Kippur War had moved only a few thousand Jews into the West Bank, became an irresistible popular force, luring tens of thousands of Israelis with the promise of cheap, abundant housing and territorial annexation. A back-to-religion movement, attracting some of the country's leading artists and bohemian symbols, emboldened the ultra-Orthodox, who established yeshivas aimed at secular Israelis and grew increasingly aggressive in promoting religious legislation and won massive government subsidies for their insular communities.

True, those trends were directly influenced by factors that had nothing to do with Israel's diplomatic isolation. The Yom Kippur War, Labor Party corruption, Sephardi resentment of Ashkenazi hegemony—all boosted the settlement and back-to-religion movements and especially the Likud Party. Still, it's no coincidence that those three movements shared a contempt for the judgment of the outside world. The seeming failure of Zionism's experiment in normalizing Jewish relations with the world was the incubator in which isolationist movements grew. In the atmosphere of late '70s ghetto Israel, it somehow made sense that the prime minister was a Holocaust refugee whose passion was taunting Europe's leaders as anti-Semites and that Uri Zohar, the country's leading satirical filmmaker and symbol of the Tel Aviv beach culture, would suddenly appear on television wearing a yarmulke.

The settlement and back-to-religion movements have been called a "counterrevolution" against the Zionist vision of integration with the nations. The impact on Israeli Judaism has been particularly devastating. The settlement movement created self-ghettoized West Bank communities where religious stringency became the norm, driving many "modern Orthodox" Jews closer to ultra-Orthodoxy. Even worse, back-to-religion yeshivas transformed a tolerant Sephardi Judaism into a mimicry of Eastern European ultra-Orthodoxy. The most extreme example of this cultural climate was the transformation of the late Rabbi Meir Kahane from political militant into theological racist. Kahane had moved to Israel in 1971 and created a tiny far-right movement that advocated encouraging Israel's Arabs to voluntarily resettle abroad. But after the Yom Kippur War and Israel's growing international isolation, Kahane embraced religious fundamentalism and a policy of forced mass expulsion. Only by adopting anti-Arab policies that would transform Israel into a pariah state, he preached, would Jews prove their contempt for the nations and their trust in God. For Kahane, expelling Israel's Arabs wasn't so much a political as a religious strategy—a crazed bid to push the Jews into a splendid isolation in which they depended on God alone for their salvation. Kahane was a reminder that the great Jewish fear—an incurable otherness—is also a great temptation. And after a hiatus, that temptation is back.

THE MORE THAT Israelis are treated as pariahs, the greater their tendency toward recklessness. The Likud's recent, self-defeating vote against a Palestinian state wasn't just a political stance but an expression of contempt for the world's judgment of Israel. And one friend, a veteran critic of the occupation, said to me with a terrible casualness, "If the world can't find space for a sliver of a Jewish state, then the world doesn't have the right to exist. And if it blows up because of a nuclear war in the Middle East, maybe that's poetic justice."

One tangible warning is the growing support for transfer of Palestinians from the territories. For now that support is a reflexive reaction to terrorism, not a program. But if Israel's isolation grows, so will the temptation toward extreme, repellent solutions. Earlier this year the National Religious Party (NRP) elected as its new leader a just-retired career combat officer named Effie Eitam. The NRP has long been a mainstay of the settlement movement, but until now it was careful to avoid extremist proclamations that would banish it to the political periphery. In the past, NRP leaders tempered their hard-line politics with compassion, as when the late NRP leader Zevulun Hammer called for a commission of inquiry into the 1982 Sabra and Shatilla massacre. Even Yitzhak Levy, Eitam's immediate predecessor and a rigid ideologue, was careful to repudiate transfer. Eitam, though, is the first NRP leader to flirt with mass expulsion. And Eitam's theological message—that the Jews are a divine people operating beyond normal rules and that the gentile nations matter only as passive recipients for Israel's spiritual greatness—offers a seductive justification for radical policies

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like transfer that would place the Jewish state outside international norms.

A BENIGN OR at least neutral international climate is a key precondition for Israeli willingness to take risks for peace. Though it's widely assumed that the Oslo process restored Israel's diplomatic standing, the sequence of events was actually the opposite. Only after the former Soviet bloc, China, India, and much of the Third World renewed diplomatic relations with Israel in the early '90s, following the Gulf war and the collapse of the Soviet Union, did Israel feel safe enough to begin negotiating with the PLO. The Madrid Peace Conference, precursor to the Oslo process, occurred at the beginning of a new era of reconciliation between Israel and the international community. Now, though, that era has ended. Almost every day the Israeli papers report another attempt to transform Israel into a pariah state—like the recent statement by Swedish Foreign Minister Anna Lind accusing Israel of war crimes. Israel's attorney general, Elyakim Rubenstein, has warned that the new international criminal court about to open in the Hague could begin targeting Israelis for supposed war crimes, including the mere act of moving to a settlement or even a Jewish neighborhood in East Jerusalem. In the current atmosphere, it's ludicrous to assume the Israeli public will feel safe enough to consider returning to the concessions offered by Ehud Barak, let alone the concessions envisioned by the Saudi plan. Barak himself has declared his Camp David offer irrelevant.

In the ongoing if temporarily muted culture war between ultra-Orthodox isolationists and Israelis who embrace the outside world, the burden of proof has shifted to the normalizers. "You might as well oppose the law of gravity," an ultra-Orthodox friend said to me, referring to those of us who believe gentile hatred of Jews is not immutable. While it's too early to see an increase in ultra-Orthodox ranks, the growing hatred of Israel around the world emboldens our theologians of despair.

Crucial to the ultra-Orthodox worldview is that secular Zionism was a false messianism, promoting the absurd idea that the nations would welcome a Jewish state into their club. And so the fact that Israel is the target of more hostile U.N. resolutions than all other countries combined isn't only a political crisis, but also a theological one. Why, indeed, has the state of the Jews, the very instrument intended to end ostracism, become the Jew of the states? The answer is happily provided by dozens of ultra-Orthodox pirate radio stations operating throughout the country and drawing tens of thousands of listeners. Soft-spoken rabbis offer the beguiling message of Jewish chosenness, an exalted otherness. The word "goy" is constantly evoked, as is this despairing rabbinic quote: "Esau hates Jacob"—that is, it's a law of nature that Esau the gentile hates Jacob the Jew. Rabbi Amnon Yitzhak, a secularist turned ultra-Orthodox preacher who draws packed crowds with his insider's mockery of secular culture, maintains a website that has tracked the world's latest anti-Jewish outbursts—ongoing proof of Zionism's failure to normalize Jewish fate.

"The Israeli debate about our place among the nations is essentially reduced to two alternative worldviews," explains Klieman. "The first is the isolationist position of *am l'vad yishkon*, a nation that dwells alone. The second is a nation like all others. That's the position of the younger generation, but it's fluid. If Israelis feel they're being given their day in court, they lean toward integrationism. But when they get slapped down, they recoil behind a protective shield. And that's where we are now."

The growing pessimism threatens Zionism's great psychological achievement: protecting the Jews from a fatal, post-Holocaust bitterness. Israel's founding preempted a massive Jewish rejection of the world, allowing survivors to turn rage into reconstruction. Israel even forced the Jews to make their peace with Europe. When David Ben-Gurion negotiated the German reparations agreement in the early '50s, resisting the violent opposition led by Begin, he compelled Israelis to choose pragmatism over history. But that choice should not be taken for granted. Perhaps the Holocaust's deepest long-term wound on the Jewish psyche isn't the actions of the murderers but the passivity of the onlookers. Jews must continually resist the suspicion that even the enlightened world cares little for their survival. The consequences—political, social, and theological—of feeding that suspicion could be shattering.

MOST ISRAELIS, OF course, still realize that "the world" doesn't hate the Jews. Even now, says Klieman, many Israelis insist on distinctions within the Arab world, let alone the world generally: "We still speak of Egypt and Syria rather than 'the Arabs.'" The expansiveness of the '90s remains imprinted on the Israeli psyche and won't be easily forfeited. That's why Israelis seize on every sign of support from abroad. A recent pro-Israel demonstration in Rome, for example, received more coverage in the Israeli press than far larger demonstrations by American Jews, precisely because most of the participants in the Italian protest were reported to have been non-Jews.

Most of all, it's American support that keeps Israelis from total despair. The United States is the great exception that doesn't prove the rule. It challenges the subversive Jewish voice that whispers, "Don't trust the goyim; at the moment of truth, they'll betray you." Israelis know that in moments of truth, the United States has stood with them and presumably will do so again. President George W. Bush's tacit endorsement, in his Rose Garden speech this week, of Sharon's strategy—denying Arafat's terrorist war any political gain—has reinforced Israeli faith in the United States.

Israel's psychological struggle is between the optimism of the '90s and the despair of the '70s. International detractors who turn every Israeli act of war into a war crime and subject the Jewish state to a level of moral judgment not applied to any other nation are inciting the very hard-line forces they deplore. Effie Eitam and Amnon Yitzhak have no better recruiters than Kofi Annan and Javier Solana. Those Israelis who cling to Zionism's promise and insist on remaining part of the world are fighting for their lives. ■

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Photography and Facts

THE THIRD TIME was the charm. Well, if not charm exactly, at least some justification. **The Bourne Identity** (Universal) was the third film about the CIA—after *The Sum of All Fears* and *Bad Company*—that I had seen in three weeks, and it was the first to afford some entertainment. Adapted by Tony Gilroy and William Blake Herron from a twenty-year-old Robert Ludlum novel, it has a setup that tickles some interest in the eventual payoff (workaday terms, but applicable). An unconscious young man is floating in the Mediterranean, is picked up by a fishing vessel, has two bullets extracted from his back plus a small cylinder from his hip, and when he recovers is unable to recall his name and background. Developments related to that cylinder lead him to think that he may be, among other possibilities, a man named Jason Bourne; that he may be a CIA agent; and that the CIA may be after him—perhaps to liquidate him.

Doug Liman, a young director, speeds along the action dexterously with his own manifest enjoyment of the tale. Matt Damon, one of the less synthetic of the current crop of mannequin leading men, seems very nearly to be a human being. And the picture has a generous helping of the usual bonus in international espionage thrillers, the travelogue treats: here the beguiling shots are of Zurich and Paris and the French countryside. Also there are, as is now *de rigueur*, some fancy computer fandangos in government offices. Plot knots, including the assassination of an African potentate and an encounter with a freewheeling young European woman, are plentiful. One anomaly: this plot entails the killing of a high-up CIA official by an even higher-up CIA official. The film catapults to an ending that clarifies Bourne's foggy mind. (It also leads to further stupefaction in our own minds about the CIA.) The story is not dull; it is merely incredible.

But it is incredible chiefly in retrospect; it is much less incredible as the film speeds on. This contradiction is typical of most thrillers and is wrapped in the phenomenon of film itself. In a thriller novel, questionable events are often handled assumptively—the assumption that a game is being played and only a spoilsport would demur. I haven't read this Ludlum book, but I have read some like it—years ago I even edited a few—and the credibility blips just need careful tooling. But when a comparable event occurs in a thriller film, something almost awesome, almost thaumaturgic, transmutes the matter. Assumption disappears: actuality reigns through innate cinematic power.

The tenuous moments in *The Bourne Identity*—such as Bourne's karate disposal of multiple armed enemies, or a man bursting into a room through the window of a fourth-floor apartment—soar on that innate power, because the essence of film is realism. Even trick photography *photographs the tricks*, sweeps them into the real. Digital maneuverings, special effects, are all embraced in the camera's ineluctable realism. The camera certifies the existence of what it looks at: the bedrock of film is factuality. When the Lumière brothers showed a train arriving at a station in 1895, there could be little question in the audience that this was a real train. They saw it. When Bourne disposes handily of three armed opponents, we see it, don't we? We may know in a corner of our brains that this action would be unlikely in life; but we accept it here because the camera's currency is fact. In a way we are grateful to the film medium for giving such moments their being.

The French critic André Bazin observed in 1951:

> The realism of the cinema follows directly from its photographic nature. Not only does some marvel or fantastic thing on the screen not undermine the reality of the image, on the contrary it is its most valid justification. Illusion in the cinema is not based as it is in the theater on convention tacitly accepted by the general public; rather, contrariwise, it is based on the inalienable realism of that which is shown.

A half-century later, we are more skeptical. We are now more consciously tolerant of fanciful moments than we used to be, yet the very act and fact of photography itself still reifies those moments.

So *The Bourne Identity* holds us.

Film's power through photography has other uses—for instance, it can also exploit verisimilitude. **Windtalkers** (MGM) is a particularly repellent example. This World War II story, set in the South Pacific, has as its reason for being the use that American forces made of Navajo troops to communicate by radio in their own language. Thus the Japanese could not understand the messages. The story also deals with the overcoming of racial prejudice against Indians, as previous films have dealt with the military's prejudice against black soldiers and Jewish soldiers. But both of these story elements are only transparent excuses for making a picture about horrendous slaughter.

John Woo, the China-born director, acquired a large reputation with the kung fu and swordplay films that he made in Hong Kong, and he was brought to Hollywood so that his violence could flourish more profitably. I managed to avoid his first four American films, *Hard Target*, *Broken Arrow*, *Face/Off*, and *Mission: Impossible II*, but this Navajo subject drew me. Very quickly it was clear that the Navajo matters were less important to Woo than the chance to revel in machine-gunnings, bayonettings, decapitation, and flame-throwing. Dozens of burning Japanese stagger through, as do a few Americans. Nicolas Cage, the hero, shoots an incinerating American to put him out of pain. Cage's acting continues to become less and less interesting, so he does not much divert us from the picture's main butcheries. Watching these bloodbaths, it was not long before I began to wonder how close I had come to the Romans who watched people devoured by lions in the Colosseum.

Woo is celebrated in the June 10–16 issue of *Variety* as a billion-dollar director: the gross receipts of his American pictures already top $1 billion. What lies ahead of this clever man but more billions? He learned early that film can deploy violence realistically—more realistically than (we contradictorily hope) we will ever see in life—to satisfy a voyeurism in us that is steeped in Roman joy, a popcorn-nourished blood lust. All too obviously, Woo isn't the first to exploit this lust, but he has become the panderer-in-chief.

Photography as merchant of the impossible, photography as merchant of carnage. Lumière brothers, look down on us in pity. ■

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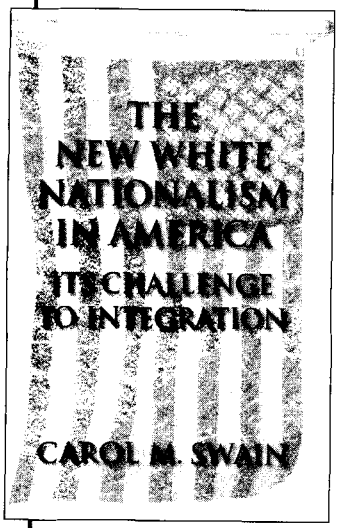

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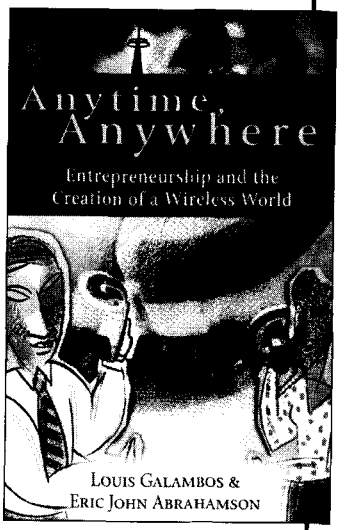

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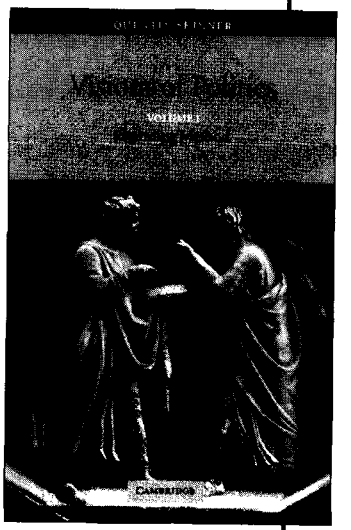

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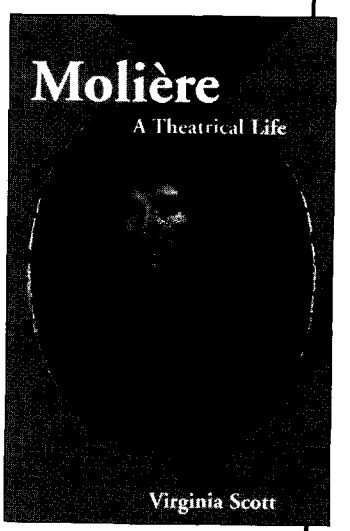

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Robert Brustein on Theater

Palace and Garden

Maria Stuart may not seem like the perfect project for Ingmar Bergman's biannual exploration of classical texts. Written in 1800, some years after Schiller had completed *The Robbers* and *Don Carlos*, it is a typical product of Sturm und Drang—more workable perhaps as an opera libretto than as a dramatic text. *Maria Stuart* has a lot of strong scenes, particularly the confrontation between the two rival queens and the Machiavellian plotting of the treacherous courtiers. Indeed, it is not only Schiller's most powerful play; it may be the best imitation extant of Shakespearean tragedy.

That is not faint praise. Shakespeare was imitated so much that the proprietary Germans of Schiller's generation used to refer to him as *unserer Shakespeare*. Schiller taught himself Shakespeare's knack for probing the nasty psychological motives beneath the courtly gambits and the heroic attitudes of political life. But *Maria Stuart* also displays some of the limitations of German bardolatry, namely a style that oscillates wildly between soaring poetry and heavy declamation, between psychological intimacy and starchy posturing, and a plot driven largely by the interception of a few incriminating letters. (Brecht was later to satirize these conventions mercilessly in *Saint Joan of the Stockyards*.)

Like so many playwrights drawn to this subject (Maxwell Anderson was another), Schiller was no doubt mesmerized by its two female roles. So, apparently, is Bergman. Two queens from the same family line, one Protestant, the other Catholic; one an aging spinster, the other a sensual inamorata; one a guilt-ridden executioner, the other a defiant victim—what tasty meat for hungry classical actresses! The current production certainly gives Bergman regulars Pernilla August (Maria) and Lena Endre (Elisabet) a splendid opportunity to stalk each other like two ravenous jaguars. In fact, the production by the Royal Dramatic Theatre of Sweden, which recently had a four-day run at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, is filled with striking scenes and strong performances. (I was particularly moved to see the great Bergman stalwart Erland Josephson playing the minor role of Mary's counselor Melvil.)

But as one who suffered through another version of this work initiated two seasons ago by the American Conservatory Theater, what kept me most engaged during the opening formalities was trying to guess how the director could make this sometimes stuffy heroic masterpiece conform to his obsessions with political brutality and unbridled sexual appetite. I was remembering Bergman's unforgettable *Hamlet*, in which Claudius took Gertrude from behind in full view of the court, as well as his *Peer Gynt*, in which the horny hero competed with the lubricious trolls for the prize of Satyr of the Week. In Bergman's theatrical world, there are no humanitarians or idealists, only vandals and lechers driven by resentment, vengeance, and insatiable lust—a worldview that begins to seem prophetic after September 11.

The director certainly manages to keep the play active and moving from its earliest, most ceremonial moments. Gorån Wassberg's setting is a platform stage decorated with a huge emblem of England in front of which English courtiers dressed in Charles Koroly's crimson costumes enter with a courtly bow. The scrim behind the setting changes color according to the moods of the play and the whims of the director. But the physical and psychological muscles of the production are flexed for one inexorable purpose: the eventual execution of Mary, Queen of Scots.

Although Queen Elizabeth I and Mary Stuart probably never met, in Schiller they share a single powerful scene. In Bergman's production, on the other hand, the two women are almost never out of each other's earshot. Bergman created a similar sense of ubiquity in *Hamlet*: even after her suicide, Ophelia continued to be a ghostly on-stage character. Here, sharing the same platform stage, Elisabet listens to counselors while Maria meets with her advisers and lovers, and Maria hears the voices of the court while Elisabet decides her fate.

That fate is foreordained. Mary Stuart represents a dire political threat to Elizabeth, especially since the queen has no progeny. It is not simply that, in league with the Earl of Bothwell, Mary had her husband Darnley murdered. More threatening than Mary's homicidal past is her Roman Catholicism, which has the potential to revolutionize Protestant England. Despite all Elizabeth's efforts, the Stuarts do eventually assume the throne of England—first James I and then his son Charles I, who loses his head to Oliver Cromwell over much the same religious differences.

In contrast with the thrice-married Mary, Elizabeth's "wish has always been to die unwed." Nevertheless, in her scene with Leicester, this redheaded Virgin Queen mounts her prone lover while discussing affairs of state, after which he rips open her bodice and she strokes his crotch. (Leicester, by the way, aside from conducting simultaneous affairs with the two queens, seems to be grabbing the behind of every available waiting woman.)

Some critics have bridled at Bergman's sexual interpolations. But he is simply trying to expose the private reality behind the public façade (he also lets Endre's Elisabet enjoy an occasional cigar). In short, every Bergman production is another tile in his mosaic of revisionist history. When Maria, preparing for death, takes off her dark gown to display a red dress and crucifix, removes her black wig to reveal a shock of white hair, and kisses Leicester fiercely on the way to the block, we realize that we are in the presence of an eighty-three-year-old theater artist at the height of his powers.

Currently playing at the Manhattan Theatre Club are the British playwright Alan Ayckbourn's **House** and **Garden**. Both plays are based on a stunt that has attracted a lot of press attention—namely, that the same characters (and actors) appear in both plays simultaneously. You have probably already read about how the actors are required to shuttle between City Center Stage I and City Center Stage II and back again for each scene in order to make their entrances on time, including consecutive curtain calls. What occupied me most during this interminable evening of theater was trying to figure out some way to walk out on both plays at the same time.

That being physically impossible, I resolved to endure a complete performance of *Garden* on a Saturday evening and then give *House* a big skip at the Sunday matinée. Each of these plays takes two and a half hours to perform (by a slowly ticking clock). To see both back-to-back is to spend a total of five hours with these insufferable people, which is an hour more than O'Neill asks us to spend with the Tyrones in *A Long Day's Journey Into*

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Night—and that's an interesting family. Now I know what Horace meant when he said that life was short and art was long.

Having been privy only to what happened in the garden, I cannot tell you what went on in the house. But given the limitations of this kind of writing, it's not hard to guess. Ayckbourn gestures toward telling a story in the Mayfair tradition, but the plots of these plays are purely incidental. What they are actually about is how the same actors play the same roles in two different plays and places. In this *Upstairs, Downstairs* world, most of the upper-class characters are slinking about having affairs, hiding behind rosebushes, and jumping into pools, while the lower orders are busy expressing their disapproval. The housekeeper spouts malapropisms such as "The beef will be indelible" or "I've been held up and humidified," while the gardener spends a lot of time chewing his tongue disdainfully like Barry Fitzgerald in *Bringing Up Baby*. Actors are perpetually making metronomic entrances and exits, obviously in order to get upstairs to the next theater on time, so that a reviewer becomes less concerned with evaluating their performances than with measuring their blood pressure. As a result, I cannot tell you what I thought of the actors aside from the fact that they managed their British accents all right, and I cannot make a judgment on John Tillinger's direction other than to say that, like Mussolini, he made the trains run on time.

Garden (and one may assume *House* as well) is written in the style of Michael Frayn's considerably funnier farce *Noises Off*. It is a genre in which the gimmick is forced to do the work of the imagination. Writing such as this puts the British theater in a time warp to the world of such immortals as Ben Travers and Benn Levy and Frederick Lonsdale, all of whose plays seemed to have been set in Berkshire featuring the same nerveless characters. It was a period when nothing more serious broke across the brows of the theatergoing public than whether the breakfast eggs had been sufficiently coddled or whether the serving maid had showed up late for lunch with her knickers missing.

In 1955, my colleague Kenneth Tynan wrote a piece lamenting "The Lost Art of Bad Drama." He was thinking of a whole genre of successful bad plays whose elements he described like this:

> At no point may the plot or characters make more than superficial contact with reality. Characters earning less than £1000 a year should be restricted to small parts or exaggerated into types so patently farcical that no member of the audience could possibly identify himself with such absurd esurience. Rhythm in dialogue is achieved by means either of vocatives ("That, my dear Hilary, is a moot point") or qualifying clauses ("What, if you'll pardon the interruption, is going on here?"); and irony is confined to having an irate male character shout: "I am perfectly calm!"... Women ... should declare themselves by running the palm of one hand up their victim's lapel and saying, when it reaches the neck: "Let's face it, Arthur, you're not exactly indifferent to me."

Tynan's requiem for the thoroughly bad play was premature. With Ayckbourn's *Garden* (and presumably with *House* as well), it is enjoying a splendid renaissance. ■

Jed Perl on Art

Circa 1950

If you take a close look at just about any period in the history of art, you will find an almost bewildering array of different styles or modes or manners flourishing simultaneously, and the middle of the twentieth century, the time that is in many respects the prologue to the time in which we live, is no exception. Certainly **Barnett Newman, Joan Mitchell,** and **Edwin Dickinson,** three painters who were active around 1950 and who have been the subjects of major retrospectives this spring and summer, could not have worked in more different ways or arrived at more radically different images.

Here are three stand-alone visions: Dickinson's delicate and melancholy observations on the landscape and the figure, at the Albright-Knox Art Gallery in Buffalo; Mitchell's calligraphic flurries and hullabaloos of brushwork, at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York; and Newman's sometimes vast planes of color punctuated with one or more slim vertical lines, at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. To see these three achievements one after the other, as was possible in recent weeks, is to see the very idea of a period style evaporate in the face of contradictions that are apparently too fundamental ever to be bridged. And yet there is something about the very irreconcilability of these visions, about the very insistence with which Newman, Mitchell, and Dickinson inhabit their separate spheres, that can affect a museumgoer in similar ways. Their unto-myself-ness may be their bond. The very dissonance of their imagery does not refute the idea of a period style so much as it challenges simplistic notions about the origins of style, and presses us to wonder whether independent expressions can in fact be generated by some essential communality of feeling.

In 1950, Dickinson was fifty-nine, Newman was forty-five, and Mitchell was twenty-four. Mitchell was at the beginning of a forty-year career, while Dickinson had already been exhibiting for some thirty years, but both painters could be seen as part of a loose-knit fraternity known as the School of New York. Dickinson was an old-timer who took an interest in the goings-on at the Artists' Club, where Mitchell was one of the younger members; and both Dickinson and Mitchell were among the large group of painters included in the Stable Annuals, the gathering-of-the-tribe exhibitions held at Eleanor Ward's Stable Gallery in the early 1950s. De Kooning admired the stormy-weather painterliness of Dickinson's smaller canvases, and this was at the very time that Dickinson was teaching at the academically oriented Art Students League and gathering kudos among traditionalists for the razor-edged exactitude of some of his work.

As for Newman, he had his first and second one-man shows in 1950 and 1951 at the Betty Parsons Gallery, a white-hot center of New York School activity. Those exhibitions received some unfriendly reviews, and Newman concluded that his deepest inclinations as an artist placed him in a contrarian relationship with the overt expressionism that had become virtually a company-town style. A decade later, however, Newman would seem to some (including Clement Greenberg) to have achieved a more fully convincing expression of New York's austere independence than even de Kooning, who in the early 1950s was regarded by many of his fellow artists as the man who had single-handedly defined the new spirit in art.

Each life runs its own meandering course, and yet there is always something in the imagination that craves the simple demarcations of decades and half-centuries and centuries. This craving is not only a retrospective matter. For Mitchell, Newman, and Dickinson, 1950 was a fulcrum year. The war was past, the

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economy was good. Opportunities were expanding. In Mitchell's case, the 1950s would be the beginning. She was part of a generation that was emboldened by what de Kooning and Pollock and Hofmann were doing in the late 1940s, and she accepted their improvisatory impulses as a living tradition; by the mid-1950s she was animating canvases with her own kind of delicate yet supercharged handwriting. Her finest work from then until her death in 1992 would be a series of variations on what was essentially a single calligraphic idea.

NEWMAN, BETWEEN 1948 and 1951, found his own kind of assertively pared-down image. First there was *Onement I*, with its vein of rough-edged orange inscribed top to bottom on a vertical swath of warm earthy brown. Then, in 1950–1951, there was *Vir Heroicus Sublimis*, perhaps the best painting that Newman ever made, an eighteen-foot-wide expanse of red, punctuated by five slim vertical bands, that exudes a controlled yet big-hearted kind of felicity. As for Dickinson, there is certainly a sense that in the years around 1950 what already amounted to a life's work was beginning to strike his avant-garde friends as an immediately compelling vision. The most successful of his large allegorical compositions, the architectural fantasia *Ruin at Daphne*, was completed in 1953, after a decade's labor. In his smaller landscapes and self-portraits he was at last able to move easily between competing inclinations toward extreme improvisation and fanatical deliberation. And he was in the important "15 Americans" exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in 1952, which also included Pollock, Rothko, and Still.

By 1950, Dickinson was recognized by the new American independents as being their kind of old-style American eccentric, and that relationship could begin to suggest some interesting connections between earlier American vantage points and the street-smart idiosyncrasies of mid-century Manhattan. Writing about Dickinson's work in the 1980s, John Ashbery, who moved to New York in 1949, observed that there is a kind of "weirdness which seems to be a main ingredient in the greatest works of the American imagination." While Ashbery did not put Dickinson in the same league as Melville and Whitman, he did make a connection between Dickinson and some of "the major Abstract Expressionist painters [who] have been canonized to the point where no one considers them the least bit odd." Ashbery believed that "it would be hard to find a more eccentric bunch of artists in history" than Newman and Pollock and their contemporaries; and if there was something eccentric about Newman's or Pollock's next-to-nothing imagery, who was to say that there was not some underground relationship with earlier American generations of off-the-grid visual artists?

Already in the 1920s, Dickinson had been dreaming up darkly ambiguous figure compositions, such as *An Anniversary* and *The Cello Player*, in which the nightmarish clutter and the displaced figures suggest the mysterious lives lived behind closed doors in Hawthorne's and James's stranger tales. Even Dickinson's most informal canvases, of a nude torso or the swirling Cape Cod surf, can be so abruptly painted as to suggest an enigma on the order of the paintings of Ryder, who fascinated many artists in the 1940s, including Pollock. If there is an attitude that can be said to link the work of Ryder and Pollock and Dickinson with the work of Newman and Mitchell, it is the belief that a work of art does not bear the mark of its maker so much as it becomes the mark of its maker. The artist has not vanished into the complexities of the painting so much as the painting has become the artist's way of continuously reminding us that *I am here.*

THERE IS SOMETHING almost incantatory about Barnett Newman's strongest paintings; they exert a power that is out of all proportion to the material that is actually before our eyes. Newman knows how to give pigment and canvas a preternatural importance. His rhetoric is pared-down yet grandiose, and this makes for strangely dissonant effects. Each of the paintings from around 1950 has a strikingly eccentric force. In *Onement I* and *Onement III*, we are held by the roughness and thickness of the vertical orange or red stripe and by the relative thinness of the brown paint of the surrounding surface. In *Vir Heroicus Sublimis*, the heat of the red is curiously counteracted or cooled by the smoothness of the paint-handling. Each quality or characteristic that Newman brings to the painting takes on an animistic power: the power of roughness or smoothness or thickness or thinness or brownness or redness or whiteness or orangeness.

Each effect is bold-stroke, up-front, unique. *The Wild*, with its shot of red, is less than two inches wide and nearly eight feet high. *The Promise* is a painting that exults in its own blackness, a blackness interrupted by two stripes, one off-white, one grayish-blue, that only serve to darken the dark. Like so many American artists of his generation, Newman had rejected both the Freudian stewpot of Surrealism and the idealism of Mondrian, with his dynamic interactions of forms. What Newman wanted was a painting that referred to no larger historical idea or ideal, that was itself and itself alone; and although there was something quixotic about his desire to deny the undeniable presence of Surrealism and Constructivism in his work, he did create, with *Onement I* and *Onement III* and *Vir Heroicus Sublimis* and *The Promise* and perhaps a dozen other paintings, a vehement austerity.

These canvases are beyond argument; their presence is as immediate as a human presence. There is a figural gestalt to the vertical format of many of the paintings, and even when the canvas is horizontal the narrow, vertical bands of color, which by the 1960s Newman was referring to as "zips," tend to telegraph a figural sensation. This representational connection is underscored in the literature on Newman, for it seems to be generally agreed that he took an interest in a Giacometti catalogue published by the Pierre Matisse Gallery in 1948, on the cover of which there was a long vertical cutout that revealed, inside, one of Giacometti's attenuated figures. There is a peremptoriness about Newman's strongest canvases, and this can suggest the flesh-and-blood heat and vitality of a human being. We respond to the orange and brown in *Onement I*, to the reds in *Vir Heroicus Sublimis*, and to the grayish-blue and off-white stripes on black in *The Promise* not as color orchestrations but as existential situations, as the inescapable nature of the painting, in much the way that we think of a certain person as being blue-eyed or brown-eyed, a blond or a brunette. These paintings have a meaning that is encased in their most immediate and evident characteristics.

THE PRESENTATION OF Newman's work in Philadelphia could not have been better. (The retrospective will be at Tate Modern in London in the fall.) The paintings had space to breathe and to expand, and Ann Temkin, the curator in Philadelphia who organized the show, kept the wall texts to a minimum, so that Newman could work his magic without unnecessary interference. Many visitors, including many long-time Newman admirers, experienced the show as a revelation; the straightforward installation helped us to reclaim an iconic figure as a working artist. It was probably also good to be seeing the work outside the overheated atmosphere of Manhattan. The paintings did not feel as if they had been prejudged. A museumgoer had a chance to recapture the atmosphere of open-ended discovery that surrounded Newman when he first came before the public. And the unprepossessing installa-

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tion was nicely underscored at the end of the main part of the show, where a visitor could sit down and watch an interview with Newman that had been filmed for a 1963 CBS program called "Contemporary American Painters." Here the Newman who in photographs, with his moustache and monocle, can seem a rather showoffish and disagreeably vain figure, emerges as a remarkably plainspoken and appealing personality. Listening to Newman conversing easily in his studio, I sensed the quiet honesty behind the impassioned egotism. I liked the man.

In 1963, Newman spoke about American art's "new grand vision," a vision that had nothing to do with "acting out one's neuroses" or "expressing one's sensations," and everything to do with "put[ting] down what you really believe and what you really are concerned with or what really moves you." But his own art was no longer as grand as it had been a decade earlier, and the general loss of strength would continue until his death in 1970. Perhaps it was inevitable that an art so much based on revelatory moments would lose force as time went on. Only in his works on paper was Newman able to sustain a level; the black-and-white brush drawings that he did in 1960 are quite as strong as the ones he did a dozen or so years earlier. What seems to have gone out of the canvases was the excitement of paint surface, the immediacy of the materials. An impersonality invaded the work. One problem in 1960 was Newman's frequent use of acrylic. The canvases feel calculated, machine-tooled; and although that can itself be a meaningful pictorial effect, Newman's brand of bolt-of-lightning authenticity became muffled, corporatized. The saving peculiarity evaporated. In the group of paintings called *Who's Afraid of Red, Yellow and Blue*, the color is no longer uncannily eccentric.

Perhaps it is the very absence of color, which may have lost its emotional excitement for Newman, that accounts for the relative success of *The Stations of the Cross*, the series of fourteen black-and-white paintings that Newman worked on from 1958 to 1966, and which looked far better in Philadelphia than they have at the National Gallery in Washington, where the installation feels crowded and the lighting is poor. I still can't help feeling that the very idea of this abstract recapitulation of the Passion verges on pomposity, and yet when Newman works here with bare canvas and stays closer to the immediacy of the materials, using rough edges and textured areas, he reclaims some of his original force. The paintings, with their unfolding procession of variously articulated black and white stripes, suggest an operatic purism.

I SUPPOSE IT is no wonder that an artist who gambled everything on brusque originality should have been unable to sustain that originality over time. There is an all-or-nothing drama to Newman's work, but then even a painter such as Joan Mitchell, whose autograph is far more closely related to that of other artists of her generation and who seems from the very start to know how to gain strength from what is going on around her, can run out of steam. Mitchell, who produced a gloriously self-confident group of canvases in the mid-1950s, went through nearly a quarter-century of prosaic and uncertain work, only to miraculously reassert her powers in the mid-1980s, with a final phase that matched and ultimately perhaps exceeded even her strongest compositions of the 1950s. Mitchell's brushstrokes, both early and late, have a turning-back-on-themselves kind of stinging rococo power, and her finest paintings, composed of what can seem to be the infinite variety of such brushstrokes, are all elaborate flourish and steely accent. In the early work, this animated and elegant tracery sometimes has a sooty grayness that suggests a certain New York state of mind, a mentality that is at once excitable, pleasure-seeking, and world-weary. In Mitchell's final works, done after some thirty years spent living in Paris and the country around Paris, the strokes are curvy and beguiling and the colors are the colors of nature, only with the volume turned way up; Mitchell's greens and purples and oranges and blues achieve a startling over-the-top power.

Mitchell's art is an art of accretion. She weaves together many small painterly acts. But to experience her finest paintings is to experience not the parts but the whole, for the discrete compositional decisions are ultimately subsumed in a unity that is, in its own way, as absolute as that of Newman's work. There is a philosophical vision, or at least a psychological one, behind this unitary structure. Mitchell, not unlike Newman, is telling us that there are experiences that we cannot accept piece by piece, that we must accept all at once. This might be said to be an essentially Abstract Expressionist idea, and it is an idea that can help to explain the fascination that Dickinson's modestly scaled landscapes exerted on an artist such as de Kooning, for in Dickinson's work, too, the parts are often subsumed in the whole, in what amounts to a single painterly flourish.

There is a danger, or so I believe, in this unitary idea that the essential experiences are the ones that hit us all at once, for the result can be an impassive homogeneity, and a coarsening of experience. This is a problem in some of Newman's late work—

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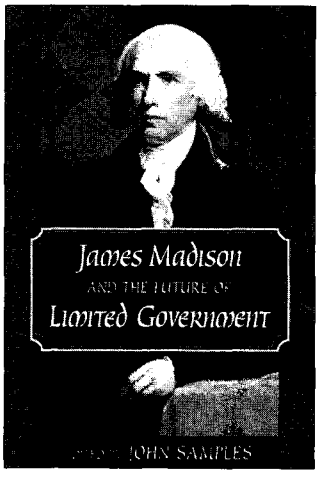

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in, say, *Who's Afraid of Red, Yellow and Blue I* and *II*. But heterogeneity is no assurance of excellence either—a point that is brought forcibly to mind by Mitchell's work, which is often weakest when she aims to maximize the variety. In some large triptychs done in the 1970s, in which she mingles her painterly flourishes with an almost mosaic effect of jostling rectangles, the result is a prettified confusion, a decorative chaos. And yet it may be that Mitchell had to go through this period of wayward, pile-on-the-contradictions ambition before she could return to an earlier kind of simplicity and imbue it with an altogether new kind of emotional coloration.

Mitchell's work can have the quickening impressionist force of nature poetry. When the relations between the parts and the whole are most effective in her work—in an early painting such as *Evenings on Seventy-third Street* (1956–1957) and in a late one such as *South* (1989)—there is a sense of all the parts as acting in concert to such a degree that they become one. Especially in the late landscape-like abstractions, you feel very strongly that the coherence of the canvas is related to the coherence of nature, and that each brushstroke has a life not unlike the life of a flower or a fruit or a plant or a tree, and that all of this life adds up to the vitality of the landscape, which is also the vitality of the painting. Yet the landscape metaphor, which Mitchell insists on, does not quite describe the coursing physicality of these paintings, which have an almost body-like quality, but a body-like quality very different from that of Newman's work. In Mitchell's paintings, each separate part, each stroke or group of strokes, functions with the vigor of muscle and bone and nerve, and together they give the work of art its pushing-out-from-within sense of well-being. In Mitchell's paintings, the singularity of the brushstroke is constantly reclaimed by the manyness of the painting, which is itself a kind of oneness. The paintings, especially the later diptychs, are symphonic, and this is a symphony at the point when all the various instrumental voices are nearly dissolved into a single voice.

Going through the Mitchell retrospective, which has just opened at the Whitney Museum, is not an entirely satisfying experience, but this is not the fault of Jane Livingston, the show's curator. (The exhibition will be in New York until the end of September, after which it travels to Birmingham, Fort Worth, and Washington.) An exhibition that focused on the early and late work might have been more effective—but when you see the full range of the career, you have to admire Mitchell's toughness, her ability to push things through. The steep decline in the quality of her work in the late 1950s may have been related to her gathering sense that the kind of painterly image that she created was no longer at the center of the art world's concerns. In the 1960s, the time of Pop and Op, she could seem an artist who had lost her way. And it may not be irrelevant that her return to confidence came in the 1980s, when painterliness was once again fashionable. Some will point out that her best work was by and large not done during her long romantic involvement with the painter Jean-Paul Riopelle, a relationship that was by all reports stormy and tormented. Whatever the explanation for these artistically troubled times, in the last rooms of the Whitney show Mitchell comes through, in *South* and *Bracket* (1989) and *Untitled* (1992), with lyric visions that will not look out of place among the very best that the New York School produced a generation earlier—alongside Pollock's *Cathedral*, de Kooning's *Excavation*, Rothko's first shimmering rectangles, and the rosy-fingered dawn of Guston's luminous yet subdued canvases.

COURTESY WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART

Joan Mitchell, *Evenings on Seventy-third Street*, 1956–1957

THERE IS AN extremism about the work of both Newman and Mitchell, an extremism that in American art is frequently related to an assertion of the grandeur of the individual, and to a Romantic strain that in the nineteenth century found expression in the paintings of Ryder and Blakelock and in the writings of Hawthorne and Melville and Poe. It is the echoes of this strain of American Romantic feeling that link Mitchell and Newman to Edwin Dickinson, and would have made such a connection comprehensible to artists around 1950. Douglas Dreishpoon, the curator at the Albright-Knox Art Gallery who organized the Dickinson retrospective, has subtitled the show "Dreams and Realities," but one could also argue that all of the dreams and the realities in Dickinson's work are aspects of Romantic experience, for in each instance what Dickinson seems most alive to is not the narrative of a dream or the particularity of a reality but how he responds to all of this as a feeling individual, as a Romantic spirit wielding a pencil or a brush. Although Dickinson painted a far greater range of images than either Newman or Mitchell, he also seems to be an artist who is closeted with his images. Dickinson does not give us a view of a world so much as he defines a viewpoint. What is out there concerns him much less than what is inside him.

Writing of Dickinson around the time he was in "15 Americans" at the Museum of Modern Art, Elaine de Kooning praised the variegated effects in his art as being "the result of method not theory," and the same could be said of Mitchell's and Newman's work. De Kooning was saying that the artist follows an inner compass, not

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an idea that is extrinsic to the work; and the excellent presentation of Dickinson's manifold achievement in Buffalo underscores de Kooning's assertion, for Dickinson had a way of shifting from diamond-sharp lucidity to befogged mysteries and from humdrum detail to baroque extravaganza that can only be explained as a matter of following one's nose. We see all the sides of his work: one room contains eleven self-portraits; a large gallery holds the complex fantasy compositions that he did from the 1920s into the 1950s; two smaller rooms are devoted to landscapes and figures; and there are several rooms dedicated to the beautiful drawings, which seem to have preoccupied him increasingly in the decades leading up to his death in 1978. (After closing this month in Buffalo, the retrospective travels to Philadelphia, New York, Little Rock, and Lincoln, Nebraska.)

Dickinson is not an artist who ever exactly reveals himself. Strangely enough, this is true even in the many self-portraits, where he tends to regard his own handsome, chiseled head, with searching eyes and elegant beard, as a fantastically mysterious image—a sort of nineteenth-century souvenir cast ashore in the mid-twentieth century. What the exhibition does give a museumgoer is a feeling for the man's wide-ranging tastes and avidities and curiosities: his passion for old New England architecture, for women's faces and bodies, and for the landscape and seascape of Cape Cod, where he lived for many years. Dickinson's art is rarely self-indulgent, but it is supremely self-absorbed. I never believe that Dickinson is presenting a locale as having its own inherent fascination, as Hopper sometimes does, just as I never believe that Newman wants to show how precisely one shape relates to another shape, in the sense that Mondrian always does.

Going through the Dickinson show, you find the artist using broad, paint-loaded brushes for a study of foaming surf, and, around the same time, the smallest brushes for a study of an elegantly carpentered seaside inn—and yet the variety seems to suggest that what most interests Dickinson is the unfolding adventure of paint-handling, an adventure that involves wildly contradictory impulses. When Dickinson goes from working very tightly to working very loosely, I am left feeling that it is the *very*, the hyperbole itself, that really matters to him. In his drawings, which are among the high points of his art, he is carried along by the weight of the lines, whether they are the knife-edge ones or the soft, barely there ones. Dickinson is a remarkable renderer of the truths of this world, but people and places also seem to recede under the elegance of that line. If Newman's and Mitchell's art is about the singularity of a sensibility, Dickinson's art might be said to be about the vagaries of a sensibility; but he, as much as they, keeps bringing us back to the imagination of the maker.

Perhaps the strongest impressions that the Dickinson retrospective leaves are general ones: a sense of the playfulness of softly brushed colors and the hubris of decisively etched contours; an afterimage of white-infused violets and greens and browns and of smoky gray surfaces and gunmetal gray depths. Since the 1950s, many of Dickinson's most ardent admirers have tended to prefer his smaller *premier coup* landscapes to the larger imagined compositions over which he labored for long periods of time. I agree. In the larger works Dickinson's colors and surfaces tend to go dead on him. There are too many blacks and grays, and too many of them are too similar in value and handling.

Composition With Still Life, a vast canvas that was finished in 1937 and acquired by the Museum of Modern Art in the 1950s, does live up to its strangely equivocal title. The painting, in which we glimpse through the general gloom several fragmented bodies, some porcelain containers, an elaborately carved and gilt piece of woodwork, and who knows what else, might be described as combining the hard-nosed sensibility of Eakins with the wistful phantasmagorias of Tchelitchew, and although the result is pure Dickinson, its grimly fantastical integrity leaves us no means of approach. Even the best of the imagined compositions, *Ruin at Daphne*, in which Dickinson finally moves away from his enveloping darks and gives his dream of classical architecture a warm red tonality and a gamely unfinished look, remains weirdly remote: the plan for a dream, not the dream itself. But many of the smaller paintings are triumphs of sensibility, salutes to the vagaries of the imagination as it makes its endless moment-by-moment adjustments. They are freeze-frames of messy experience.

To turn from the work of Edwin Dickinson to the work of Joan Mitchell and Barnett Newman is to see three versions of American grandiosity. In their finest works, the grandiosity is reined-in and humanized by the heartbeat of a visual sensibility. This grandiosity is not necessarily a matter of size. Newman's breakthrough work, *Onement I*, is only a little over two feet high, and Dickinson can be at his most unruly and hyperbolic in those casual seascapes of his, in which the foaming Atlantic is reduced to a howl or growl of painterly strokes. What the American grandiosity involves is a particularly New World kind of rejection of any large system of ideas or ideals that might pose a threat to the free operation of the imagination.

It is especially American to feel that an artist must break the mold. That was surely Newman's attitude. Dickinson would probably not have said so, and neither would have Mitchell, who in the 1950s was quoted as explaining that she saw herself as a conservative in relation to the work of Pollock and Kline. And yet if Dickinson can be said to work in the tradition of the *premier coup* landscape painters of the nineteenth century, much as Mitchell can be said to work in the tradition of the large-scale lyric Abstract Expressionist canvases of the late 1940s, they are both inclined to turn those traditions into personal assertions. (Their approach is utterly different from that of Fairfield Porter, who was a great admirer of Dickinson's work, but who chose to assert himself through his point-by-point re-imagining of a tradition, through his way of inhabiting each element of a tradition and making it his own.)

"Speech," Newman wrote in 1947 in an essay about the origins of artistic expression, "was a poetic outcry rather than a demand for communication." That is as clear as possible a description of some essential impulse in the work of not only Newman but also Mitchell and Dickinson. All their work is related to an upsurge of interest in Romantic ideas in the 1930s and 1940s; to the renewed enthusiasm for Americans such as Melville, Poe, Whitman, and Ryder, but also for the achievements of Blake and Delacroix. Some of Newman's most important early writings were published in a short-lived magazine called *The Tiger's Eye* (the tiger being Blake's tiger) that was published by Ruth and John Stephan in the late 1940s. *The Tiger's Eye* was the subject of an interesting exhibition at the Yale University Art Gallery this winter. The Stephans published work by Rothko, Newman, Pollock, Still, and others. They explored a variety of archetypal Romantic themes, such as sea travel, night, and primitivism. And in general they endeavored to wrest Romantic themes from what many American artists felt were the frozen cosmologies of the Surrealists and of two groups of artists who were then known as Neo-Romantics, an English group much absorbed in the picturesque and the ideas of Blake, and an American group that included Tchelitchew and some of the ballet crowd in New York. What the younger Americans, including Newman, who worked closely with the Stephans, were after was a rough-hewn Romanticism—a Romanticism as original, as ornery, as immense as *Moby-Dick*, a book that had a talismanic place among the

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American avant-garde in the 1940s.

A true Romantic movement must be a movement of individualists, and in that sense Newman, Mitchell, and Dickinson can each be said to take his or her place in what amounted to an anti-Romantic Romantic movement in mid-twentieth-century New York. That each artist's work looks utterly different from that of each other artist can almost be said to amount to a definition of this movement. And that each artist would have denied being a part of any such movement may be the ultimate proof that each belongs. These artists speak the language of capitalized words that had been the language of Romanticism in Blake and Carlyle: they paint Man, Nature, Dream, Reality. When Newman and Mitchell and Dickinson are most truly themselves, they are truly nobody but themselves; they seem to ignore, even to be ignorant of, anybody's world but their own.

Standing before their paintings, we may be inclined to forget that this is not necessarily the way art must be. Indeed, many works of art, and many works of art created around 1950, excite us with their very sense of connectedness. When de Kooning's fractured forms evoke Picasso, or when Porter's interiors evoke Vuillard, we feel that the artist is glad to be implicated in a tradition that is larger than he is. But there is also, circa 1950, a strong desire to create a kind of painting that is very much a "poetic outcry," and Newman and Mitchell and Dickinson, in their different ways, mean to sing in solitude. In the fifty years since, we have had all too many opportunities to discover that what is presented as a "poetic outcry" can turn out to be little more than the cover for an utter inability to communicate, but such coarseness ought not to blind us to the hard-won power that can be achieved by a fiercely solitary work. ■

Idiot Time

By ALAN WOLFE

Wealth and Democracy: A Political History of the American Rich by Kevin Phillips

(Broadway Books, 432 pp., $29.95)

Stupid White Men ... and Other Sorry Excuses for the State of the Nation! by Michael Moore

(ReganBooks, 304 pp., $24.95)

I.

AS LORD BRYCE noted in 1888 in *The American Commonwealth*, the American way of choosing presidents rarely produces politicians of quality. Subsequent events vindicated his point: in the half-century after his book appeared, Americans elected to the presidency such undistinguished men as William McKinley, William Howard Taft, Warren G. Harding, Calvin Coolidge, and Herbert Hoover. An era that included two wars, the assumption of an empire, a stock market crash, and the beginning of our greatest economic crisis was also marked by as mediocre a political leadership as we have had in our history.

Two features stand out in this roll call of incompetence: the presidents with the lowest reputations over the past hundred or so years were all Republicans, and they were all guided by the conviction that their job was to side with the powerful in any potential conflict with the poor. Our current president is a Republican whose policies favor the rich. His political guru, Karl Rove, is a great admirer of William McKinley and his strategist Mark Hanna. Will this administration, therefore, take its place among the worst presidencies of modern times? In his recent book *Public Intellectuals*, Richard Posner mocks anyone who makes predictions about such matters. Forgive me, then, for making this one: George W. Bush will be lucky if his presidency ever rises to the level of Taft's or Harding's.

A strong case can be made that the Bush administration is the most pro-business presidency that the United States has ever endured. In 1952, Charles Wilson, President Eisenhower's secretary of defense, opined that the good of the country and the good of General Motors could be entwined. Often ridiculed, his statement is, in comparison with the policies of the present administration, a model of statecraft. General Motors, after all, was unionized, so what was good for it was also good for huge numbers of American working-class families. And automobiles, its major product, offered to the upwardly mobile Americans of the period a dramatic opportunity—in that age before the politics of smog—to improve their living conditions.

The companies that the Bush administration confuses with the public interest, by contrast, stand out for their rapaciousness in a generally vicious business climate. Enron, to which the president was unusually close, not only destroyed the retirement prospects of its own workers, it also schemed to cause deliberate discomfort to California's energy users—a no-holds-barred approach to doing business that foreshadowed the hideously ugly efforts of this administration to issue frequent and confusing warnings of potential terror attacks when confronted with perfectly appropriate questions about its preparedness for the big attack that took place on its watch. And Halliburton, which now faces an SEC inquiry into its accounting practices during the time that the firm was run by Vice President Dick Cheney, is one of many companies that would presumably benefit from the administration's energy policy, discussions of which it has gone to some length to keep out of the public's hands. The business of the Bush administration is not just business, but sleazy business. America's worst firms picked America's most complaisant politicians (and vice versa) because they knew that they could work with each other.

Even when terrorists gave George W. Bush his great moment of leadership, he retreated, when the active fighting in Afghanistan stopped, to a policy of appeasing the already powerful. Although America was vulnerable to attack in part because of the way certain large private companies routinely carried out their business, not once has this president challenged any established industry. The administration committed itself to drilling for oil in Alaska during the campaign, and nothing in the subsequent violence in the Middle East has caused it to rethink alternatives such as energy conservation. It has not used its considerable powers of persuasion—"jawboning," as it was called when presidents knew that business leaders could be sons of bitches—to force airlines into compli-

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ance with the security improvements mandated by Congress. On trade policy and farm policy, the administration caved so quickly to the demands of lobbyists that it managed to evoke nostalgia for Bill Clinton (whose free-trade positions cost him votes with labor unions and captains of dying industries). Presidents such as Bush, who jog softly and carry no stick at all, signal to every entrenched interest that nothing will stand in the way of an inclination to have government always on the side of those who already possess influence and power.

But when historians make their judgments about Bush, it will not be the similarities between Teapot Dome and Enron that strike them, nor will it be a tax cut so biased in favor of the rich that it makes a mockery of fairness and so huge in size that it will cripple the ability of this administration, or any other administration, to bring security to innocent civilians against whom war has been declared by as evil an enemy as the American people have ever faced, let alone to bring financial security in old age and decent health care coverage. The true shame of the Bush years lies not in debates over levels of taxation or specifics of regulatory policy: there are, and there should be, differences of opinion over those kinds of questions. Nor is the fact that Bush is pursuing a pro-business and conservative agenda the reason to judge him harshly: Americans have never pushed their leaders to equalize incomes, nor have they revolted in anger when, in the name of economic growth, those leaders pursue programs that benefit some at the expense of others. With Bush, questions of method and timing are more significant than questions of policy.

Whatever one thinks of Bush's mediocre Republican predecessors, they received a mandate from the voters to pursue their programs of unabashed support for business. They promised pretty much what they delivered: a return to "normalcy," as Harding—like Bush, a linguistically challenged man—so memorably put it. Their policies evoke an era before focus groups and media consultants, when politicians had no problem proclaiming their true allegiances.

But Bush never received a mandate for his policies, and not just because he was handed the presidency by the Supreme Court, which was acting with barely concealed partisan fervor against its own well-established legal doctrine. Even had Bush won fair and square, he would have done so by distorting beyond recognition the true beneficiaries of his programs dealing with taxation, government regulation, the environment, and energy. During the 2000 election, Bush's advisers discovered something that no one before had ever quite known: there are simply no limits to how much you can lie in American politics and get away with it. And it is the transposition of that approach to politics into policy that constitutes the disgrace of the Bush method. A tax cut radically biased toward the rich is not nearly so damaging as a tax cut passed while one side to a much-needed debate responds to criticism by simply making up figures.

There exists a kind of slack in democratic politics. Most people are too preoccupied with their own affairs and not sufficiently interested in wonkish matters to call politicians to account when they lie. Politicians know about this slack; they pay people to study it closely, and they are frequently tempted to take advantage of it. They may, of course, be deterred from doing so. For one thing, they might conclude—how naïve this seems now!—that not every opportunity to win should be exercised, because politics requires long-term cooperation among politicians with different views of the public good. Or they might make a strategic calculation that winning one battle through such methods might cause them to lose subsequent battles, and perhaps more important ones, down the road. Or they might conclude that too much distortion would give their political opponents an advantage to attack them.

None of these constraints mattered to the Bush administration. It somehow knew that Democrats would be too craven to challenge them effectively. It had no interest in the long-term effects of its slash-and-burn political methods. It treated the informal rules of the political game as territory for suckers. As a result, it got its tax cut. And the poison that it has introduced into the body politic will remain long after some other administration is forced to deal with the tax cut's rampant irresponsibility.

And then there is the disgrace of timing. As Kevin Phillips points out in *Wealth and Democracy*, not all conservative presidents have been bad ones. Washington, Lincoln, and Theodore Roosevelt stand in a completely different class from Taft, McKinley, and Hoover. Phillips has devoted his career to explaining a fundamental American paradox: we have a pro-business economy and a populist political culture. Since we admire business, we frequently elect politicians whose policies favor the rich; but since we want to ensure that fairness is honored, we reserve our greatest admiration for those who "made their own names fighting elites." It is not that Lincoln and Roosevelt were predisposed to take on the powerful. They governed in times of crisis and, responding to the situations in which

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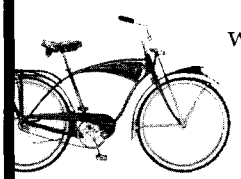
At age 12
in New York City's
borough of Queens

Henry Petroski

author of THE PENCIL and THE EVOLUTION OF USEFUL THINGS



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they found themselves, they did what they had to do, even if what they had to do put them into confrontation with some of the most powerful forces of their era.

Our crisis is certainly not of the magnitude of the Civil War or the Great Depression; but this country, especially after September 11, has serious issues on its hands. Ambivalent in their approach to economics and politics, Americans continue to appreciate capitalism, which is why they are willing to give Bush's proposals a hearing, although without any great enthusiasm. But at the same time they know that fairness matters, and that there is more to membership in the American nation than getting and spending. The Bush administration hears only the first language of business as usual; it is tone-deaf to the second, deeper, and ultimately more important language of purpose. Its response to a people who have suffered one political scandal after another, only to find themselves suddenly defined as the enemy by large numbers of people throughout the world, is to refuse, as if on principle, any calls for greatness or sacrifice, any efforts to mobilize the forces of government on behalf of national objectives, and visions of who we are as a free people, any attempts to broaden and to define the meaning of citizenship.

Bush does not lead because he does not believe in leadership, a concept that he would no doubt dismiss as a devious effort on the part of liberal elites to deter him from his predetermined course (or as a thinly veiled brief on behalf of John McCain). But it is precisely because Americans are not demanding leadership that we need it so desperately. Instead of a president who can speak to the best in all of us, we have a president willing to listen only to some of us.

In its one year in office, the Bush administration has not merely obliterated the memory of Republicans such as Lincoln and Roosevelt. It has also distanced itself from Eisenhower's warning about a military-industrial complex, from Nixon's attempts to steal the left's thunder by adopting programs such as wage and price controls, and even from Reagan's willingness to back off from right-wing nostrums that had little public support. The Bush administration knows that the tradition of Republican stewardship of the nation came to an inglorious end with the watered-down version represented by the current president's father, and it has no plans to resurrect it. Noblesse oblige is dead; ignobility is to be praised, and obligation is to be shunned. We known that Bush is not the hardest-working of modern presidents—and yet he seems to have made all those fund-raising phone calls, and given all those GOP speeches, and appeared at all those county fairs and professional conventions, not out of some deep sense of duty to the nation, but to reward those who so generously rewarded a man so unfit for office as himself. His mediocrity is not a by-product of his mistakes. It is his very intention. He has seen what historical greatness would cost him and his supporters, and he has chosen another path.

II.

KEVIN PHILLIPS'S *Democracy and Wealth* can be read as an explanation of how we arrived at such a state. Since we have a free-market economy and a populist political culture, we do not in America have a politics of class. The poor do not, as socialists of one stripe or another hoped they would, vote for candidates who offer to redistribute income to their benefit. Yet neither do we have a politics of plutocracy: the rich, or at least their children, can often be found expressing solidarity with society's most disadvantaged. Instead we have uneasy swings between periods of excess, such as the Gilded Age and the 1920s, and periods of reform, such as the 1930s and the 1960s. Phillips leaves little doubt where we are now: "The last two decades of the twentieth century ... echoed the zeniths of corruption and excess ... when the rich in the United States slipped their usual political constraints, and this trend continued into the new century."

Although Phillips's book begins and ends with the present, its intellectual reach is far greater. Phillips wishes to rewrite such progressive and populist classics as Charles and Mary Beard's *Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States* (1935), Gustavus Myers's *History of the Great American Fortunes* (1936), and Ferdinand Lundberg's *America's Sixty Families* (1937). In tables that spell out who the richest Americans were at various points in our history and how they made their fortunes, Phillips adds little to what those books have already told us; but he is right to try to bring them up to date. What has been seriously missing from our national conversation about money and political influence in recent years is a tone of principled anger.

For since 1980, America's already unequal distribution of income and wealth, in Phillips's account, has become outrageously more unequal. The top 1 percent of Americans held 9.3 percent of America's income in 1981, according to one of Phillips's tables, compared with 15.8 percent in 1997. Levels of wealth concentration now approach what they were just before the stock market crash of 1929. And the rich in America do better than the rich anywhere else; the top fifth of Americans make 11 times more than the bottom fifth, compared to ratios of 4.3 in Japan, 7.1 in Canada and France, and 9.6 in the United Kingdom.

No doubt some of the advantages enjoyed by the rich are due to their entrepreneurial foresight. But Phillips, a critic of the free market, emphasizes the degree to which public policy contributes, often arbitrarily, to the gap between the rich and everyone else. In his view, the tax cuts of the Reagan years rank among the four most significant transformations in wealth distribution in American history, along with the Hamiltonian financial reforms of 1789–1792, the effects of the Civil War, and the New Deal. The poor, unlike the rich, did not benefit from Reagan's tax cut; any gains achieved by lower rates were eaten up by higher payments for Social Security. Squeezed between declining real income and fewer benefits, the worst-off Americans found themselves working longer hours or borrowing more extensively to keep up. Even though the country's gross domestic product went up, its index of social health declined, as child poverty and youth homicide increased while health care coverage deteriorated.

Phillips is not always a reliable guide on these issues. Like all advocates of a cause, he cites data that support his point of view, but when he is presented with contrary indications he simply shifts the grounds of his argument. Unemployment rates were far higher in Europe during the last decades of the twentieth century than they were in America; but instead of congratulating the American economy for putting people to work, Phillips instead attacks the quality of the jobs that were produced. And when he points out that for middle-class Americans the costs of health clubs and private schools increased because the rich could pay more for them, he verges on caricature: most middle-class Americans were too busy enjoying their newfound access to such goods to pay too much attention to the price. Phillips should be read as a social critic, not as an economic historian. Righteous anger is his forte, not nuanced analysis.

Yet he does concentrate our attention. The rich did get richer in the last two decades of the twentieth century, and to a considerable degree their gains came at the expense of everyone else. In times past, such periods of excess gave rise to opposition in forms ranging from utopian novels to political re-alignments. Yet neither political party during this period felt called upon to respond. At a time when the right was concerned with abortion and homosexuality and the left pushed affirmative action and multiculturalism, the

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single most important moral issue facing the country—the right of every individual to be treated by government with equal dignity and respect—went all but undiscussed. As a result, a once-vibrant populist tradition degenerated into the vile Pat Buchanan and the narcissistic Ralph Nader.

EVEN MORE INTELLECTUALLY ambitious than his retelling of American economic history is Phillips's extended comparison between sixteenth-century Spain, the Golden Age of the Netherlands in the seventeenth century, and the British industrial expansion of the nineteenth century. In each case, he points out, new elites arose to accumulate, with the help of government, fantastic wealth. New technologies, from Leewenhoek's microscopes to Watt's steam engine, furthered exploration and advance. (Spain somewhat mysteriously drops out of Phillips's story.) Flushed with their success, the elites overextended themselves, falling victim to what Phillips calls "the hubris, even self-deception, that attends leading world economic power status." Decadence set in, as sober and industrial values were replaced by those of luxury and snobbery. Ultimately war followed peace, and defeat followed victory. The great years of Holland and Britain are now to be found in museums, as the actual economies of those societies fell back to normal.

Analogies between different countries in different eras can be offered as suggestive or they can be offered as determinative. Phillips leans toward the latter. It is not the intricacies of Dutch religious wars or British activities in India that interest him so much as the lessons that these historical events might hold for the United States now. Like other empires at other times, America's recent economic growth was fueled by a new technology and received considerable support from government. We, too, overextended ourselves, especially in Vietnam. Money corrupted our culture just as it did theirs. And our future looks grim, he believes, for democracy will be in trouble if we do nothing to curb the influence of wealth.

Although Phillips is quite vague in his calls for reform—he speaks at one point of "a more democratic approach to taxation, money, and banking"—he does not offer them with much enthusiasm. He seems to believe in some kind of economic nationalism, but he also notes "its poor prospects for long-term success." With such perfunctory proposals, Phillips leaves us feeling that we too may find ourselves best represented in a museum, so that some future economic power may ponder the mistakes that we made.

Over the course of thirty years, Phillips has written two wonderful books. *The Emerging Republican Majority* (1969), still a favorite among conservatives, outlined the ways in which the Republican Party could overcome the liabilities of its elitist reputation by appealing to Northern working-class ethnics and displaced Southern whites. *The Cousins' Wars* (1999), one of the most insightful books written about American society in the last fifty years, brilliantly analyzed the common religious and ethnic divisions that underlay the English and American Civil Wars, as well as the American Revolutionary War. *Wealth and Democracy* is not in their class. It lacks the powerful realism of the former, substituting in its place a free-floating anger that never attaches itself to a program for correcting the abuses it documents. And it does not achieve the startling originality of the latter, for it is badly organized, sloppily written, and loosely argued. One of the best informed and most sober political commentators in America has unfortunately produced something of a rant. And we are all the worse for it, because *Wealth and Democracy*, its lack of focus and its forced analogies notwithstanding, is exercised by a matter of great importance.

Phillips argues that wealth and democracy are ultimately incompatible. The pursuit of the former requires an oligarchy, while the realization of the latter demands greater equality. Republicans can best handle this situation—Phillips rarely offers advice to Democrats—when they temper their natural affiliations with the rich and the powerful by adopting populistic language, and even populistic policy. Richard Nixon did that, in part by following Phillips's advice in *The Emerging Republican Majority*. George W. Bush, except for his appeals to conservative religious voters, has not shown much interest in populism (nor, it should be added, in Kevin Phillips, whose views have shifted in the direction of *Mother Jones*). So what options are open to him?

One way to resolve the inherent conflict between wealth and democracy would be to suspend democracy in the interests of wealth. At times Phillips darkly hints at such a prospect. "As the twenty-first century gets under way," he concludes, "the imbalance of wealth and democracy in the United States is unsustainable, at least by traditional yardsticks. Market theology and unelected leadership have displaced politics and elections. Either democracy must be renewed, with politics brought back to life, or wealth is likely to cement a new and less democratic regime—plutocracy by some other name." This is surely too extreme; the last I looked,

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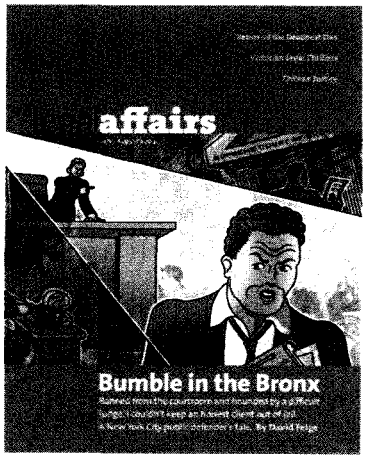

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elections were still in place. Democracy is strong enough to survive the ascendancy of George W. Bush and Dick Cheney.

If we take Phillips's insistence on the tension between wealth and democracy as a starting point rather than a tragic dénouement, we can begin to appreciate why contempt has become so defining a feature of the Bush administration, whether it takes the form of the president mocking a journalist for his knowledge of French, or the secretary of defense responding to critics with sarcastic disdain, or the vice president simply refusing legitimate and legal requests for information, or the attorney general treating the Constitution as an impediment. An administration with no mandate pursuing with grim determination policies with no public support—and yet which must nonetheless operate within a system that has a free press, an investigative legislature, and an independent, if compromised, judiciary—has little choice but arrogance. It could decide, of course, that cooperation with other branches of government is actually a good thing for democracy and that the best policies are those pursued through informed public debate, but then it could hardly hope to reward the rich and the powerful. And so it does the opposite, shifting as much of the country's wealth as it can to those who need it least, while launching invective and attributions of bad motives to anyone who opposes its goals. Democracy and wealth do push in opposite directions, and for all its many flaws, *Democracy and Wealth* helps us understand why.

III.

Something about the subjects of wealth and power seems to bring out the worst in people. The more populistic he becomes, the more ominous Kevin Phillips sounds; and it is a shame to see him fall into the company of people like Ross Perot, Patrick Cadell, and Ralph Nader. But for Michael Moore there is not much room to fall. Films such as *Roger and Me* and books such as *Downsize This!* marked him as egocentric and frivolous from the start. Still, he has tried his best to stoop even lower with *Stupid White Men*. A more irresponsible book on a more important topic would be impossible to write.

Phillips only raises the prospect of an unelected leadership, but for Moore, the coup, as he calls it, has already taken place. Al Gore, he says, is the actual president of the United States, because "he received 539,898 more votes than George W. Bush." (At least John Ashcroft knows what is in the Constitution that he routinely ignores; Moore seems not to know that the document calls for a victory in the electoral college.) But instead of Gore, the coup brought to power the "Bush junta," which is composed mainly of millionaires. One of them is Dick Cheney. "When nominated for the vice presidency," Moore writes, "Cheney hemmed and hawed about divesting himself of his Halliburton stock. I guess he knew that the good times were coming." It is beneath Moore, of course, to point out that Cheney did in fact divest himself of the stock—or that Halliburton, which was selling for roughly $40 per share in the fall of 2000, is now worth less than $20. (If Cheney knew anything, evidently, it was that the bad times were coming.)

Moore, to put it mildly, does not write to inform. Attitude is all. But if you are writing a book critical of a president who has a problem with the truth, it does not require all that much intelligence to figure out the importance of being truthful yourself. Moore could care less. He describes how he decided one day to watch *The McLaughlin Group*, where he found the conservative pundit Fred Barnes complaining that kids no longer knew about the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. So Moore decided to call Barnes and to ask him whether he knew what they were. "Well, they're ... uh ... you know ... uh ... OK, fine, you got me," he quotes Barnes as responding. "I don't know what they're about. Happy now?"

I don't know Barnes, but the story struck me as implausible, and so I e-mailed him about it. "It never happened," he wrote back. "One, I've never talked to Michael Moore. Two, I have read the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. I didn't read them until I got to college, but I did read them. So I know exactly what they're about. Besides that, I've seen movie versions of them." Choose who you wish to believe, but I am disinclined to believe someone who tells me, as Moore does, that 200,000 Americans may be suffering from mad cow disease, that the United States practices apartheid, that first-year airline pilots for commuter airlines live below the poverty level, and that the Confederacy won the Civil War.

Thirty or so years ago—*Roe* v. *Wade*, decided in 1973, is a good benchmark—conservatives concluded that they were unrepresented in liberal America. They decided to organize themselves politically to reverse the course of their country. Whether one agrees with them or not, one cannot fault them for lacking determination and seriousness of purpose. They did the research, mobilized the voters, tracked the votes of the politicians, and raised the money necessary to achieve their objective. They never did overturn that Supreme Court decision, although they are responsible for weakening it. But owing to their efforts the whole complexion of America shifted rightward, and now we have a president who pays careful attention to everything they have to say.

The contrast with Michael Moore could not be greater. Instead of analyzing an issue, he personalizes his opponents, even charging Prescott Bush with ties to the Nazis (which he admits that he cannot prove) or asking his grandson the president whether he is an alcoholic and how this may be affecting his job performance. Rather than searching for a credible cause, Moore resorts to some of the most outlandish appeals to gender and racial identity politics that I have ever seen, as in this: "Women? They deserve none of the blame. They continued to bring life into this world; we continued to destroy it whenever we could." If this book is what passes for a political manifesto, then Tom Paine is truly dead. Moore peppers his book with factoids, weird memos, open letters, bizarre lists, LOTS OF SENTENCES IN CAPITAL LETTERS, and name-dropping accounts of how he happens to know some members of the Bush family personally. It is meant to be satire, I suppose; but the only person skewered is Moore, who proves himself to be the only stupid white man around. Anyone bent on redistributing income in favor of the rich could not get a luckier break than having a critic like Michael Moore.

One would think that a person who believes that George W. Bush stole the presidency from its rightful occupant Al Gore would at least prefer to see Al Gore in the office. But Moore is too "radical" for that, of course; he informs his readers that he did not vote for Gore, and he regularly engages in Nader-like rhetoric about how both parties are indistinguishable when it comes to issues such as arsenic in the drinking water. He even seems to relish the idea of a second term for Bush, for he concludes his book with a message to the Democrats: "So yes, WE denied you the White House. WE tossed you out of Washington. And WE will do it again." (As if to show that he cannot be consistent even on this obnoxious point, however, Moore tells us how he tried to persuade Floridians from voting for Nader so as to help defeat Bush.) Moore is astoundingly out of touch with the reality that he claims to care so much about. He is Chomsky for children. He does real damage to the cause that he thinks he is advancing. As is also true of Ralph Nader, the American right is much in his debt.

Theodore Roosevelt followed William McKinley, Woodrow Wilson came after William Howard Taft, and Franklin Delano Roosevelt took

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over from Herbert Hoover. One thing mediocre presidents seem to do is to prepare the ground for better presidents, and in some cases great ones. When it comes to who will succeed George W. Bush, I make no predictions. But there is reason to think that four or eight years of Republican largesse to big business, accompanied by such extreme efforts to keep its generosity from public scrutiny, will prepare the American public to appreciate why government is necessary and why its policies must, above all else, be fair.

The next chapter in the way our politics treats the rich and the poor is unlikely to take the forms that it has taken in the past. If Kevin Phillips's book is any indication, populism has run out of gas. No credible coalition can be built on the basis of nationalistic anger in this age of global capitalism, leaving populists sputtering with impotent rage. And if Michael Moore speaks for what passes for the American left—he must be speaking for someone, as his book is a best-seller—no help can be expected from that quarter either. But this should be taken as a sign of hope rather than a sign of despair. It opens the political territory for a challenge from a Roosevelt-style Republican such as John McCain. It also suggests to Democrats that they will need to address directly, and with considerable passion, the warping of priorities that occurs when government shifts so decisively in favor of the rich.

Neither task will be easy. For McCain, it would mean, as it did for Theodore Roosevelt, a break with his own party—not exactly the easiest path to the presidency. For Democrats, it means finding a way to capitalize on the gains that Clinton's centrism bequeathed to the party while breaking with his all-too-frequent subservience to big business, a trick that no potential Democratic candidate for the 2004 nomination has yet pulled off. But there is every reason to believe that there exists a hunger for leadership in America even though not much leadership is in evidence. Finding ways to do what seems difficult if not impossible is a crucial aspect of leadership. Any Republican or Democrat capable of overcoming those odds would, if elected, be in a good position to repair the damage done by the election of 2000 and its aftermath. ■

Everywhere at Home

By PAULA FREDRIKSEN

Diaspora: Jews Amidst Greeks and Romans by Erich S. Gruen

(Harvard University Press, 386 pp., $39.95)

EXILE, DISPLACEMENT, wandering, loss: in Biblical tradition and in later rabbinic commentary, in the medieval poems of Yehudah ha-Levi and the modern political screeds of Theodor Herzl, the idea of diaspora has dominated Jewish identity. In its religious mode, "diaspora," perceived as punitive, has served as a penitential device. The people sin, and God uses foreign armies (Babylonians for the first exile, Romans for the second exile) as the instruments of his wrath, to call the people to repentance. In its secular mode, "diaspora" has served as Zionism's foil. Modern Jews renounce their exile, take control of their history, and re-found their commonwealth in their own land. In both equations, guilt is a constant: in the first instance, guilt about "causing" the diaspora; in the second, guilt about choosing to live there.

Few ideas can give so much coherence to so many centuries—twenty-five, to be exact—of Jewish experience. Yet this construct, as Erich S. Gruen points out, has a problem: it is historically false. Eloquently, learnedly, persuasively, Gruen invites the reader of his new book to consider familiar evidence from the Jewish past from a new—one might say a non-diaspora—perspective. His point is simple, but its historical implications are profound. As he observes, in the nearly four hundred years that stretch between Alexander the Great (d. 323 B.C.E.) and the emperor Nero (d. 68 C.E.), Jews could be found in large numbers, and in well-established communities, throughout the Mediterranean. Neither military compulsion nor the vicissitudes of captivity had brought most of them to those places. To state the point a little differently: the Roman destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple in 70 C.E. did not cause the second diaspora. Many ancient Jews—probably most ancient Jews—had by that point lived outside the land of Israel for centuries. They did so, evidently, because they wanted to do so.

Why did these Jews leave their homeland? What were they doing abroad? How did they continue to live as Jews and, thus, to think of themselves as Jews? And how did their non-Jewish neighbors live with and think of them? The answers to each of these questions are various and surprising. Various, because no blanket explanation (like that conjured by invoking the idea of ancient "anti-Semitism") can speak to so many different local situations. Surprising, because this vast and vigorous Mediterranean Jewish civilization, a major force in the development of Western culture, has been until recently almost invisible to the non-specialist.

THIS INVISIBILITY IS itself a significant part of the story. Its reasons are linked to each other, and to the Bible. The two major religious traditions that descended from this period—Gentile Christianity and rabbinic and post-rabbinic Judaism—have constructed their respective historical identities and their respective scriptural canons in ways that caused these ancient Jews to disappear. Consider, for example, the double canon of the Christians, the Old and New Testaments. These concentrate on events occurring in and around territorial Israel. The trajectory of the Christian biblical story stretches from Adam to Abraham through Moses to David, then to the prophets, and then to Jesus of Nazareth. The narrative time of the Old Testament stops somewhere in the mid-fifth century B.C.E., when exiles returning from Babylon try to reconstitute their lives back in Jerusalem. (Some texts, such as Daniel and Esther, were in fact written later, but they present themselves as much earlier.) The narrative time of the New Testament begins with the birth of Jesus—around 4 B.C.E. if you rely on Matthew, around 6 C.E. if you rely on Luke. The Greek-speaking Jews of the western diaspora simply vanish into this four-century-long narrative lacuna between the Testaments. The loss is not without irony, for the Gospels and the letters of Paul—the core canon of the Christian Testament—are the literary products of this effaced community.

Jewish religious memory does no better. Judaism, too, has a double canon. The Tanakh—the biblical scriptures in Hebrew

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comprising the five books of Moses (*Torah*), the prophets (*Nevi'im*), and sundry writings (*Ketuvi'im*)—forms the older portion. Jewish biblical narrative ends with the end of the Babylonian exile, in the 530s B.C.E., though other writings within the collection take the story up to post-exile Jerusalem. The newer portion of the Jewish canon is the Talmud, the vast anthology of rabbinical traditions in Hebrew or its linguistic cousin Aramaic. The earliest Talmudic text, the Mishnah, was redacted around 200 C.E.; the Gemara (later commentaries on the Mishnah), redacted separately in Palestine and Babylon in the fifth and sixth centuries C.E., completes the collection. To close the gap of the six-plus centuries between 2 Chronicles (the last book of the Tanakh) and the Mishnah (the oldest part of the Talmud), the rabbis invoked oral tradition. The *torah* ("teaching") that Moses did not write down he spoke to Joshua, who in turn passed it to the elders, who gave it to the prophets, who then gave it to the sages. The terminus of this oral Torah, said the rabbis, was themselves.

As now, so then: most Jews were not rabbinic Jews. But unlike their kinsmen in other Jewish subcultures, the rabbis articulated their social and religious vision through a huge, compelling, and coordinated body of writing that became a vital literary legacy. Eventually the movement formed academies whose students disseminated rabbinic learning and practice widely. By the High Middle Ages, rabbinic Judaism was Judaism *tout court*. The patrimony of Hellenistic Judaism, in the rabbinic view, had been hijacked by the Gentiles, now embodied in the hostile church, who had based their Old Testament on the Septuagint. (A late tradition in the Talmud recounts that on the day the Bible was translated into Greek the angels wept: heaven had foreseen this disaster.) The medium of "authentic" tradition, then, was Hebrew. Thus the rabbinic Jewish community, which might most naturally have been expected to preserve something of the social and religious legacy of its Greek-speaking sibling, for all practical purposes erased it.

The third reason for the virtual invisibility of the Jews of the ancient western diaspora is the overwhelming impact that they had on all of subsequent European culture. What impact, and how? Since they were Jews, they had the Bible. When they migrated West, and their vernacular shifted to Greek, their scriptures shifted with them. By about the year 200 B.C.E., Jews in Alexandria had completed the translation of their sacred texts: the Tanakh had become the Septuagint. Thus the idiosyncratic revelations of the Jews—of a God who created the entire universe; who refused to be worshiped through images; who linked social ethics, religious ritual, jurisprudence, sexual and alimentary prescriptions, time-keeping, torts, and taxes in his commandments; who chose Israel and who promised redemption to his people and indeed to the whole world—came to be broadcast in the international linguistic frequency. The God of Israel, through the Septuagint, conquered the West. No Greek-speaking diaspora, no Septuagint. No Septuagint, no Christianity. No Christianity, no Western civilization. This Hellenistic Jewish community has been invisible to all but historical cognoscenti in part as a consequence of its cultural success.

You Made Me Read You And I Didn't Want To Do It

At first the page was only a furnished room.
You were the one who furnished it.
A red couch gaudy as a party mask.
Crooked shelving.

And then, after a bit,
weather came into the room.
The clouds "skittering,"
you wrote, "like suds."

And so we pronounced your novel
akin to an ancient travel guide
with its fussy certainty about fares,
adequate hotels, local cisterns.

How can't the book
be shy before our eyes?
It's our fault, not the book's.
It was so embarrassed for us.

Lee Upton

So we return to our question: who were these people? And what were they doing so far from home?

Ancient warfare, as Gruen points out, regularly involved deportation and dislocation. Conquered peoples could suffer forced resettlement elsewhere; slave traders routinely accompanied armies; war produced refugees. Jews, like other peoples in an age of empire, migrated because they were compelled to migrate, because they were deported. But, again like other peoples, Jews also migrated because they wanted to migrate. They were enticed by the wider horizons and the increased opportunities for trade that empire also brought.

One post-Alexandrian king moved two thousand Jewish families from Mesopotamia to garrison colonies in Asia Minor. They relocated voluntarily, with inducements, as supporters of the regime. Active service in foreign militaries, as mercenaries or as enlisted men, also aided Jewish resettlement. Opportunities in business and agriculture beckoned, and Jews—like others—responded. And in Rome, the Jewish population there by choice was increased when Jewish slaves, brought West in the wake of Roman victories in Judea, were eventually manumitted and took their place in the city as freedmen. 1 Maccabees, a Jewish text composed in the late second century B.C.E., mentions substantial western Jewish populations in Egypt, Syria, the cities and the principalities of Asia Minor (roughly, modern Turkey), the Aegean islands, Greece proper, Crete, Cyprus, Cyrene. The Acts of the Apostles, a late first-century C.E. text in the New Testament, claims that Jews came on pilgrimage to Jerusalem from all corners of the world: "Parthians, Medes, Elamites ... men of Cappadocia, of Pontus and Asia, of Phrygia and Pamphylia." Strabo, the ancient historian and geographer and the elder contemporary of Jesus of Nazareth, noted that "this people has made its way into every city, and it is not easy to find any place in the habitable world which has not received [them]."

Ancient cities were religious institutions. The workings of government, the process of education, the public experience of art and culture in various theatrical, musical, and athletic competitions: all these activities, which we think of as secular and thus religiously neutral, were in fact embedded in traditional worship. The gods looked after the city; and the citizens, to ensure the city's well-being, looked after the gods. Processions, hymns, libations, blood sacrifices, communal drinking and eating: all these were thought to contribute directly to the well-being of the commonwealth. (In our terms, these activities were authorized in the defense budget.) These forms of worship expressed and created the bonds that bound citizens together, and established the necessary relations with powerful patrons both celestial and imperial, since rulers, too, were deities. Public piety was the index of patriotism.

Living in foreign cities thus put Jews in a potentially awkward position. Like everyone else, Jews had their own ancestral god; but unlike anyone else, Jews were in principle restricted to worshiping only that god. Some pagan observers commented irritably on this fact, com-

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plaining of Jewish disloyalty, or at least of Jewish discourtesy. But ancient religiousness was much more flexible than its modern avatars. Respect for ancestral tradition was the bedrock of Mediterranean religious, political, and legal culture, both pagan and Jewish. Thus ancient pagans were prepared to respect Jewish religious difference, and even to make social and legal allowances for it, precisely because of Judaism's antiquity and ethnicity. And ancient Jews, though they were as convinced as the next ethnic group of the intrinsic superiority of their own customs and rites, respected pagan religious difference, too. Contact—even fairly intimate contact, such as worshiping and eating together—did not lead to missionary efforts to convert the heathen, who were, after all, the vast majority of humankind.

How did Jews and pagans "worship" together? Participation in civic culture was itself a kind of worship—though, as Gruen illuminatingly points out, Jews had many choices between the extremes of isolationist purity or outright apostasy. Individual Jews became members of the city councils where they lived, despite the protocols of pagan worship that were attached to such service: they negotiated exemptions and found ways to serve both their city and the traditions of their *phylos* (tribe) or *genos* (race, nation). Eventually, once Rome oversaw the entire Mediterranean, such exemptions were written into imperial law.

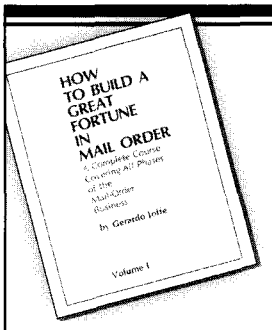
Jewish adolescents received good Greek educations in their cities' *gymnasia* and joined the ranks of *ephebes*, young adolescent males whose municipal duties included participation in the competitions offered to traditional gods. Their training in *paideia*—high cultural learning—emphasized rhetoric, music, and philosophy as well as athletics; and here Jews participated, as contestants and as spectators, in the contests that displayed excellence in all parts of this curriculum. (Again, given the religious nature of these events, the modern analogy is less to the Super Bowl or to Carnegie Hall than to High Mass.) Wealthy Jews sponsored games, such as the Olympics, that were dedicated to Greek gods. Jews served Gentile rulers as advisers and generals. And while Jews did not join actively in the ruler cults native to Hellenistic and, later, Roman political culture, they dedicated their synagogues to their pagan rulers, and prayed not to them but for them.

Two institutions, one proximate, one distant, served to express and to inculcate Jewish identity within these far-flung Gentile communities while providing yet another context for shared social and religious activity. The proximate institution was the synagogue. In a particularly rich chapter, Gruen surveys the varied evidence—literary, epigraphical, archaeological—attesting to the ubiquity and the vitality of this peculiarly Jewish organization. Remnants of these foundations have been recovered in settlements stretching from Italy to Syria, from the Black Sea to North Africa.

Synagoge might designate the assembly of the local Jewish community itself, while another term, *proseuche* ("prayer house"), specifically implies a building. Synagogues shunned standardization, as Gruen observes: no uniform pattern of organization can be teased from the historical record such as it is. Yet certain common activities seem clearly attested. Synagogues served as a type of ethnic reading-house, where Jews could assemble one day out of seven to hear instruction in their ancestral laws. Rulers granted to synagogues the status of serving as places of asylum. Synagogues sponsored communal fasts, feasts, and celebrations, and they served as an archive for community records and as collecting points for funds to be sent to the Temple in Jerusalem. They settled issues of community interest—announcing the calendar of festivals, negotiating access to appropriate foodstuffs, adjudicating disputes—and served, as did local pagan temples, as places to enact and to record the manumission of slaves. They housed schools, political assemblies, and tribunals. They had officers (women as well as men), administrators, and steering committees. They sponsored fund drives, and they honored conspicuous philanthropy with public inscriptions.

An intriguing number of these big donors were not Jews at all. They were pagans. Given the capacious character of the ancient Mediterranean society, this makes sense. The ethnic and religious distinctiveness of the synagogue entailed no social isolation, and the religious temperament and practice of majority culture were famously catholic. Interested pagans involved themselves in synagogue activities, including listening to the stories and the psalms of Jewish tradition, which were, after all, delivered in Greek. While Jews might have scruples about worshiping pagan gods, no such scruples inhibited Gentile worship of Israel's God. Local politics—as well as the presumptions native to this culture in its pagan and its Jewish modes, namely, that gods traveled in the blood, and so each people naturally had its own gods—explains why diaspora Jews would welcome such participation, and why they would impose no demand of exclusive worship (given to them alone by their God) on interested Gentiles.

Pagan benefactions to the Jewish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community met with grateful public acknowledgment. One especially striking inscription, from Acmonia in Phrygia, recalls the earlier generosity of a first-century Roman noblewoman named Julia Severa. This distinguished lady, a high priestess of the imperial cult (thus publicly responsible for the worship accorded the Julian emperors), had evidently erected the synagogue building itself. When later Jewish benefactors restored the building, they were honored in their turn in good Greek fashion with a decree and a gilded shield. As Gruen notes, "the conventions were Greco-Roman; the objectives were Jewish."

The institution distant from these diaspora communities—which nonetheless served to focus local Jewish identity and to inspire the admiration and the participation of interested Gentiles—was the Temple in Jerusalem. The Jewish military colony in Elephantine in Egypt had had a temple there, perhaps as far back as the sixth century B.C.E.; four centuries later, Jerusalem priests disaffected from the Maccabean enterprise founded another temple, modeled on Solomon's, also in Egypt, in Leontopolis. And Josephus, the Jewish historian contemporary with the evangelists, alludes to perhaps another extraterritorial temple in Transjordan. No matter. Jerusalem was the holy place that commanded the loyalty and the pride of the far-flung nation. It was to Jerusalem that Jews journeyed to celebrate the pilgrimage holidays, and it was to Jerusalem that communities everywhere voluntarily paid an annual contribution to defray the operating costs of the Temple.

The sheer volume of different types of evidence concerning this tax and the enormous amounts of money (through individually tiny donations) that it annually raised is perhaps the best index of the widespread loyalty to the Temple. Jews throughout the Mediterranean sought legal protection to guarantee their right to collect and to send this donation: their cities of residence, tempted by the quantities of cash thus collected, occasionally attempted to appropriate the funds for more local use. But pagan rulers honored Jewish ancestral custom, and as a result of these voluntary donations, Jerusalem ran in the black for as long as the Temple stood.

Under Herod, who was king of Judea from 37 to 4 B.C.E., the Temple reached its acme of splendor. He expanded the area around the sanctuary to some thirty-five acres, enclosed by a magnificent wall running nine-tenths of a mile along the perimeter. The internal organization of sacred space—concentric courtyards of various sizes—articulated the social realities of Mediterranean public worship. The empty innermost sanctum was given over to the people's God; and next, for his service, stood the altar in the court of his priests. Circumscribing the priests was the court for Jewish males; and just outside that, the women's court. But the whole was surrounded by the vast and beautiful stone tundra of the Gentiles' Court, or Court of the Nations.

As in diaspora synagogues, so in the Temple in Jerusalem: pagans as pagans had a place to worship Israel's God—in Jerusalem, in the largest court of all. The priests meanwhile made offerings at God's altar on behalf of the imperial family and the Empire. Traditional piety, national pride, international politics, tourism, public pomp: it all came together in Herod's extraordinary building. The synagogue, then, was neither a substitute for nor a competitor to the Temple. Both institutions served to strengthen, coordinate, inculcate, and express Jewish identity in all its multiplicity, and in its unanimity.

GRUEN PRESENTS HIS trenchant analysis of four centuries of diaspora Jewish experience in two cycles. The first, "Jewish Life in the Diaspora," surveys discrete communities—Jews in Rome, in Alexandria, and in Asia Minor—concluding with a chapter analyzing civic and sacral institutions, and how Jews participated in or maintained these. His storytelling is as gripping as his interpretation. Jewish life in each of these locales was hardly untroubled. In Rome, elusive evidence indicates various expulsions and actions against the community in the period between 139 B.C.E. and 49 C.E. In Alexandria, anti-Jewish violence convulsed the city in 38 C.E. and again, some thirty years later, in the wake of the revolt against Rome. Cities in Asia Minor occasionally impounded Jewish funds or suspended or abridged privileges that their Jewish residents had long ago negotiated. The universe was not friction-free. But Gruen puts these incidents into their overarching Greco-Roman context, and so he understands them in ways that contrast sharply with earlier traditions of academic writing on Jewish life in this period.

Where other writers have seen vaguely systemic, readily identifiable ancient "anti-Semitism," Gruen sees various local sporadic episodes, variously motivated. Much of the Roman evidence, regarded from the angle of senatorial politics, seems more like posturing for reasons of state than concerted and specifically anti-Jewish activity. The Roman government, he concludes, engaged in no systematic persecution of Jews—nor indeed any persecution at all; and Roman salon culture was not so much anti-Jewish but anti-"foreign." Life in Rome, for Rome's Jewish citizens, was stable and secure.

In Alexandria, a particularly toxic configuration of Greek anti-Roman resentment and Egyptian nativist agitation targeted Jewish residents when the political fortunes of the Roman governor fluctuated wildly in the transfer of power from Tiberius to Caligula. All hell broke loose. Order was restored only eventually, under Claudius, and only after some heads (including the governor's) had rolled. The violence was unprecedented, but its sources were over-determined. Some pagan Alexandrians complained, reasonably enough, that Jewish Alexandrians failed to worship Alexandria's gods and therefore were not entitled to full citizenship. Claudius evidently concurred, re-affirming the Jews' established rights and urging them not to push for more. Gruen's scrupulous review of the imperfect evidence enhances his conclusion: "Anti-Semitism [was] not the issue here."

So, too, with the situation in communities in Asia Minor. Set within the larger context of political relations between the capital city and the provinces—especially in periods when Roman strongmen battled each other for power in the seesaw of civil war—what has been presented as ancient pagan anti-Semitism seems more plausibly construed as local happenstance. "The Jews of Asia rarely required defense against the Greeks," Gruen observes. "And the Romans had bigger fish to fry." In his summary chapter on civic and sacral institutions in the diaspora—gymnasia and synagogues, town councils and temples, baths, ephebates, amphitheaters—Gruen concludes with an overview of social life, and of the ways Jews and pagans interacted, intimately and irenically, not always but mostly, in the cities whose life they shared.

THE SECOND CYCLE of Gruen's study explores "Jewish Constructs of Diaspora Life," that is, the ways that Greek-speaking Jews used the conventions of Hellenistic culture to describe that culture and their place in it. His review begins with an investigation of Jewish humor in two modes: historical fictions (Esther, Tobit, Judith, Susanna, 2 Maccabees) and biblical recreations (Testament of Abraham, Testament of Job, works by Artapanus). Few things kill a joke as fast as analyzing it; and the recreation of tone from a written text, as all readers of e-mail know, can be a tricky business. Yet the parade of characters populating these tales—stunningly beautiful Jewish alpha females, overworked angels, deeply stupid Gentile potentates, deeply stupid Gentile generals, lascivious Jewish elders, smart young Jewish lawyers, herds of drunken elephants (no

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kidding)—eventually make Gruen's point for him. Nor is this the "smiling through tears" genre of humor: Jewish foibles are held up to scorn as often as Gentile abuses of power are mocked, and as often as desperate circumstances are dramatically and often comically overcome. "The authors felt free to expose the blemishes of the Jewish leaders and populace," Gruen writes, "while lampooning the flaws of their enemies." The implication of Gruen's analysis is that insecure people would have laughed at themselves less.

Gruen's discussion of Jewish constructs of Greeks and Hellenism, the chapter that follows, could have been titled simply "Chutzpah." How did Greek Jews regard pagan Greek culture? The theme emerges again and again: what the Greeks got right (mainly philosophy), they got from the Jews. How so? Here other fictions proliferate. Plato, the Jews believed, studied Torah under Jeremiah in Egypt. From what text? A lost Greek translation of the Bible made prior to the Septuagint. One Jewish writer has Abraham as the bringer of culture to the Egyptians—another argument for superior antiquity, in a culture where older was better. Hellenistic Jews forged pagan prophecies, wherein ancient sybils hymned the superiority of Jewish culture in proper Homeric hexameters. Others presented "histories" according to which the Septuagint was translated at Ptolemy's request: he wanted this renowned book of Jewish wisdom to grace his library in Alexandria. In one account, the young Moses receives instruction from the wisest teachers among both the Egyptians and the Greeks, but of course outstrips them all; in another account, Moses teaches music to Orpheus. Brazenly, ingeniously, Jews turned out Judaizing verses ascribed to Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, and other heroes of the classical curriculum; and centuries later these show up, piously repeated, in the writings of the church fathers. In brief, Jews neither rejected not adopted Hellenism. Rather, they appropriated what they thought was best in Greek culture, and made it Jewish.

Gruen concludes his book with a lucid and powerful consideration of the place occupied by the idea of diaspora both in Jewish consciousness and in scholarly treatments of Jewish history. The persistent images of insecurity, marginality, and powerlessness that haunt Jewish history and set the tone of the lachrymose tradition simply distort our understanding of the Hellenistic and early Roman period. We lose sight of the real lives of Greeks, Romans, and Jews when anachronistic explanations of Jewish experience, such as anti-Semitism, or religious tolerance or intolerance, provide the plumbline of historical interpretation.

One fundamental aspect of ancient religion, for example, is its tie to ethnicity. All ancient peoples had their own gods. These gods dwelled in various locales—Olympus, Jerusalem, Delos—on earth and in heaven; and they were passed within ethnic groups from one generation to the next. For this reason, to translate *ioudaios* as "Jew" already risks distortion. "Judean" might work better. Their aniconism and their exclusiveness of worship set Jews apart; but their allegiance to particular dietary and ritual traditions, to revealed calendars, to their God's Temple and his holy city—all designated, with brain-numbing tone-deafness, as "nationalism" by many students of the New Testament—just makes them ancient people.

If individual peoples had their particular gods, moreover, then successful empire meant that many gods by definition existed within a single political boundary. Ancient culture, in other words, did not practice "religious tolerance." It presupposed religious difference. To see violence between ethnic groups as outbreaks of religious "intolerance" is to misdescribe the phenomenon, to bring it tendentiously into line with modern phenomena. It obscures the novelty and the anomaly of principled religious persecution when it does come, long centuries after this period.

Finally, the focus on Jewish resettlement as displacement masks the prior migration that caused it and indeed made it possible: the Greek diaspora that brought the Jewish one in tow. Alexander the Great's conquests contributed to the wholesale resettlements of Greek veterans, merchants, and travelers in his new territories. Like a magnet, they drew new immigrants with them, among them ancient Jews. For these Jews, Greek culture became their own, despite those aspects of it that, in their view, the pagans had gotten wrong. Loyalty to the homeland, devotion to the ancestral temple—these commitments were normal among all immigrant groups—co-existed with loyalty to their cities of residence. Jerusalem, said the first-century Jewish philosopher Philo, was the Jews' *metropolis*; but Alexandria, for him and his immediate community, was their *patris*, their "patrimony" and home.

The concept of diaspora as an insecure, doleful, and punitive mode of existence was the creation of a later time, and of two later religious cultures: second-century Gentile Christianity and late second-century rabbinic Judaism. Some Gentile Christians, defining themselves and their new communities over and against the synagogue, read their sacred text, the Septuagint, in increasingly anti-Jewish ways. Current events seemed to confirm their view: why would God have let Rome destroy the Temple (in 70 C.E.) or Jerusalem itself (in 135) unless he, too, condemned the Jews? And why did he condemn the Jews, if not for their refusal to become, in effect, Gentile Christians? Rome, they said, as Babylon earlier, had been the agent of God's will: Israel was now in exile forever for having refused Christ. The rabbis, meanwhile, also had to make sense of a world where Hadrian's pagan Aelia sat on top of what had once been Jerusalem. They, too, turned to their religious tradition for answers. And they, too, saw in the central biblical event of the Babylonian Captivity a spiritual model for present reality. Israel's sin had driven God, once again, to punish Israel: once again—until he sent a redeemer, the messiah, to gather them up—God had driven his people into exile. The world became captivity, *galut*.

Hellenistic Jews, as Gruen importantly argues, would not have recognized their own existence from these later descriptions. Rather, they thrived in the centuries that preceded these events—and they thrived for centuries afterward, until targeted by the late Roman imperial church. For these Jews, the difference between their ancestral homeland and their current homeland was neither a dichotomy nor a contradiction. It was a fact of their existence that they embraced. ■

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

Kick Stand

A FEW OF US AT THE NEW REPUBLIC have gotten into the habit of expressing our mundane daily conversations in the lingo of 30-second political attack ads. (Just the sort of behavior that made us so cool in high school.) Suppose a colleague wants to head to a familiar spot for lunch, and I prefer a new place. I might accuse him of having "nothing to offer but the failed policies of the past," and he might reply with an earnest call for "progress, not divisive attacks." The exercise is a contest to see who can attain the highest levels of viciousness, sanctimony, and hypocrisy when the stakes are utterly trivial.

ALAS, OUR PARODIC EFFORTS WERE outdone by the recent election for property-value assessor in Floyd County, Kentucky. If you're one of the civic delinquents who hasn't followed this race, here's what happened: The incumbent, Connie Hancock, aired an attack ad maintaining that her opponent has been "arrested or charged fifty-six times for violating the law," including DUI, criminal trespassing, felony assault, and terroristic threatening. "In a drunken brawl," the ad further charges, he "bit a man's ear completely off." As if this charge needs more dramatization, it is followed by a high-pitched scream—the sound, we presume, of a man whose ear has just been bitten completely off. How do you respond to a volley like this? Hancock's adversary, David May, begins his rejoinder by downplaying the charges. "Sure, when I was young"—May is now 27—"I did a few things I'd like to think I'd handle different. My opponent said I was arrested for DUI. That's completely untrue," he tells the camera. When you've been accused of committing 56 criminal acts, including cannibalism, it might seem like a fairly damning admission to deny only one (relatively innocuous) charge. But a cardinal rule of politics holds that you should never stay on the defensive. So May immediately segues into a brutal counter-offensive. "Why would Connie Hancock falsely attack me?" he asks. "She suspected this tape"—and here May holds up a videotape—"would surface. It's x-rated and shows just how little she values her reputation and wedding vows." At this point the ad cuts to a bedroom scene featuring a smiling, half-naked woman, strongly resembling Hancock, sitting on a bed as a man who may or may not be her husband approaches. Abruptly the video ends, and we are left with an image of May smiling and waving. Hancock ended up winning, with 7,687 votes to May's 4,631.

PERHAPS THAT'S BECAUSE MAY VIOlated another key political rule, which was dramatized by Rick Lazio's backfiring attack on Hillary Clinton in 2000: You can't directly assail a female candidate without looking unchivalrous. This lesson is also being played out in the Michigan Democratic gubernatorial primary campaign. The leading candidate is Jennifer Granholm, the telegenic, Harvard-educated attorney general. Her fellow contenders need to attack her but in an indirect, almost subliminal, way. One opponent, former Governor Jim Blanchard, has released a commercial showing a basketball coach in a locker room exhorting, "This is no time for rookies. Blanchard . . . suit up." While the ostensible message is that Blanchard has more experience than the younger Granholm, the ad's real point is to make voters think of the governor's job as akin to a position on a basketball team—in other words, one in which a woman can't compete. Granholm's other foe, ex-House Whip David Bonior, takes an even subtler tack. His commercial features an obnoxious Canadian talking about how his country dumps garbage in Michigan. "David Bonior believes it's time to stop the Canadian dumping," the ad announces. The notion of whipping Americans into an anti-Canadian fervor has long served as fodder for comedians. The 1995 movie *Canadian Bacon*, for instance, centered on an unpopular American president who rallies the public for war against our Northern neighbor with a propaganda campaign that includes a map portraying Canada as an insidious mass of maple syrup dripping over the border and engulfing the United States. But in real life, even for a native Michigander like me—who grew up in the shadow of the Canadian menace, knowing that at any moment marauding Mounties could gallop down and pillage our pleasant suburban tracts—Canadians could never serve as effective bogeymen. They're just too good-natured. So why is Bonior fomenting anti-Canadian jingoism? Granholm was born in Canada.

RATHER THAN STOKING NATIONALISTIC resentment against our Canadian neighbors, we should be joining with them to defend our common North American football culture against the rot of international soccer. The World Cup has given rise to yet another surge of pro-soccer propaganda. Like the Communists and the Third World despots of the 1970s, soccer partisans claim to represent the wave of the future and see the United States as the decadent, wheezing past. If this line sounds familiar, it's because we've been hearing it for more than 25 years. Growing up in the '70s, all of us kids played soccer. My brother and I wolfed down bowls of Kix, a sphere-shaped cereal that marketed itself as the breakfast of soccer players. But when we got old enough, everybody started playing football, and by high school soccer was largely relegated to shaggy athletic misfits. Kix, meanwhile, has abandoned its soccer theme. All this demonstrates the great flaw in the sport-of-the-future claim. In most of the United States, soccer is a sport for younger children—who develop foot-eye coordination before hand-eye coordination—who then progress on to other sports. Assuming the sport of the next generation is soccer is akin to assuming the drink of the next generation is apple juice.

ALSO LIKE THE COMMUNISTS, SOCcer's fellow travelers routinely smear heir opponents as rabid right-wingers. In his pro-soccer screed in this space last week, Franklin Foer called soccer critics "Buchananite." What the soccer elites don't grasp is that Americans, not unreasonably, associate soccer with weakness. In football, the kicker is the smallest, wimpiest player on the field—so presumptively unable to defend himself that there is a special penalty—"roughing the kicker"—to prohibit the other players from harming him. The kicker is like the near-sighted, asthmatic cousin your parents forced you to include in the game: Necessity compels his participation, but he is treated more gingerly than everybody else and is mildly scorned for it. When Americans see soccer, they see a game consisting entirely of kickers. Yes, soccer hatred has a certain socially retrograde element. (My high school football coach would not even deign to utter the word "soccer"—he called it "communist homosexual activity.") But the simple truth is that no football-playing nation has ever lost a war to a soccer-playing nation. Perhaps this is why Foer and his soccer-loving comrades persist in trying to import their system to American shores. He gleefully predicts that soccer will bring about "not the Americanization of the rest of the world, but the reverse." While his football- and freedom-loving countrymen see "Americanization" as the great hope for the world, Foer uses the word as an epithet. Call Franklin Foer, and tell him to stop his negative attacks on the United States of America.

JONATHAN CHAIT

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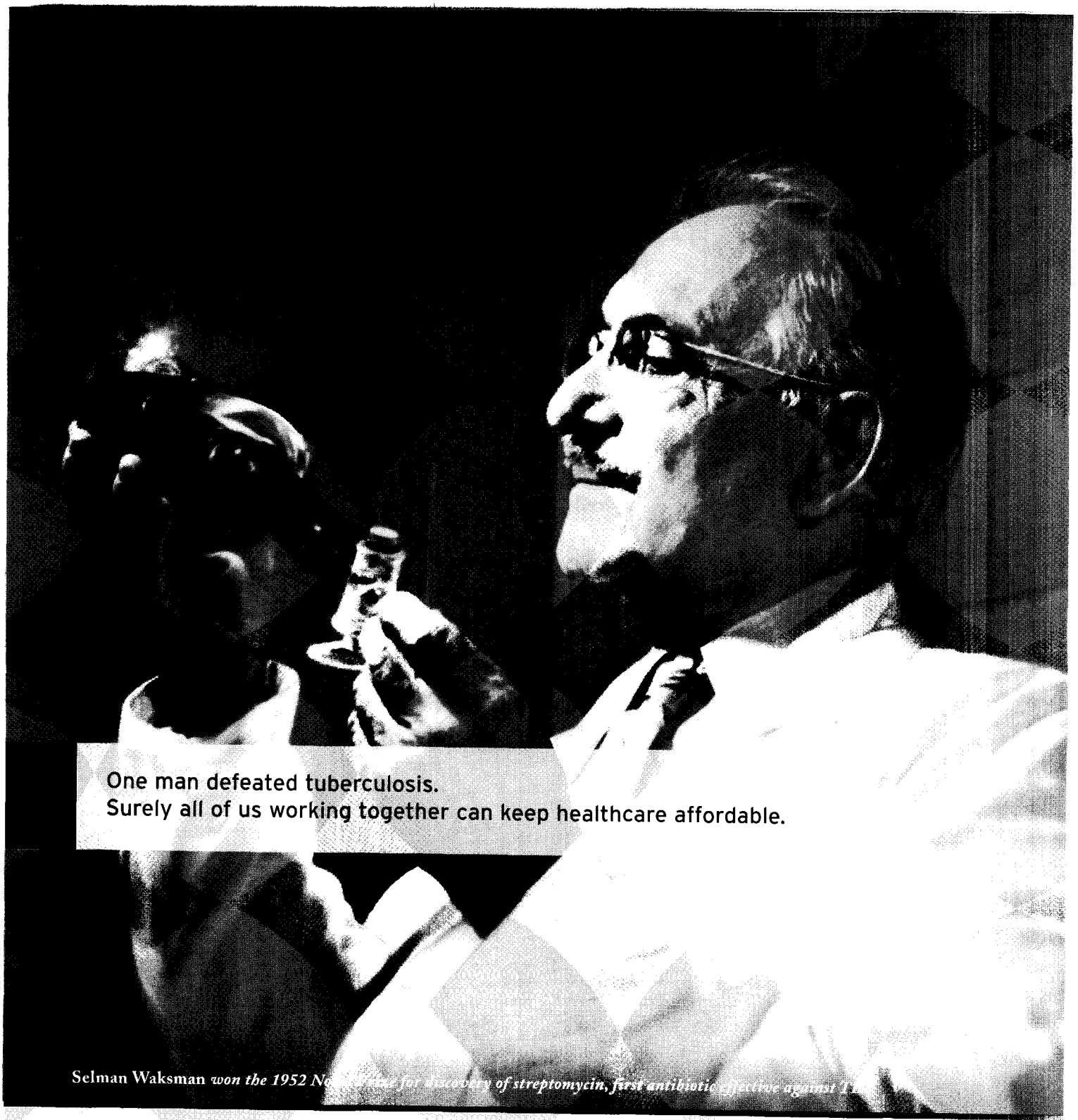
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